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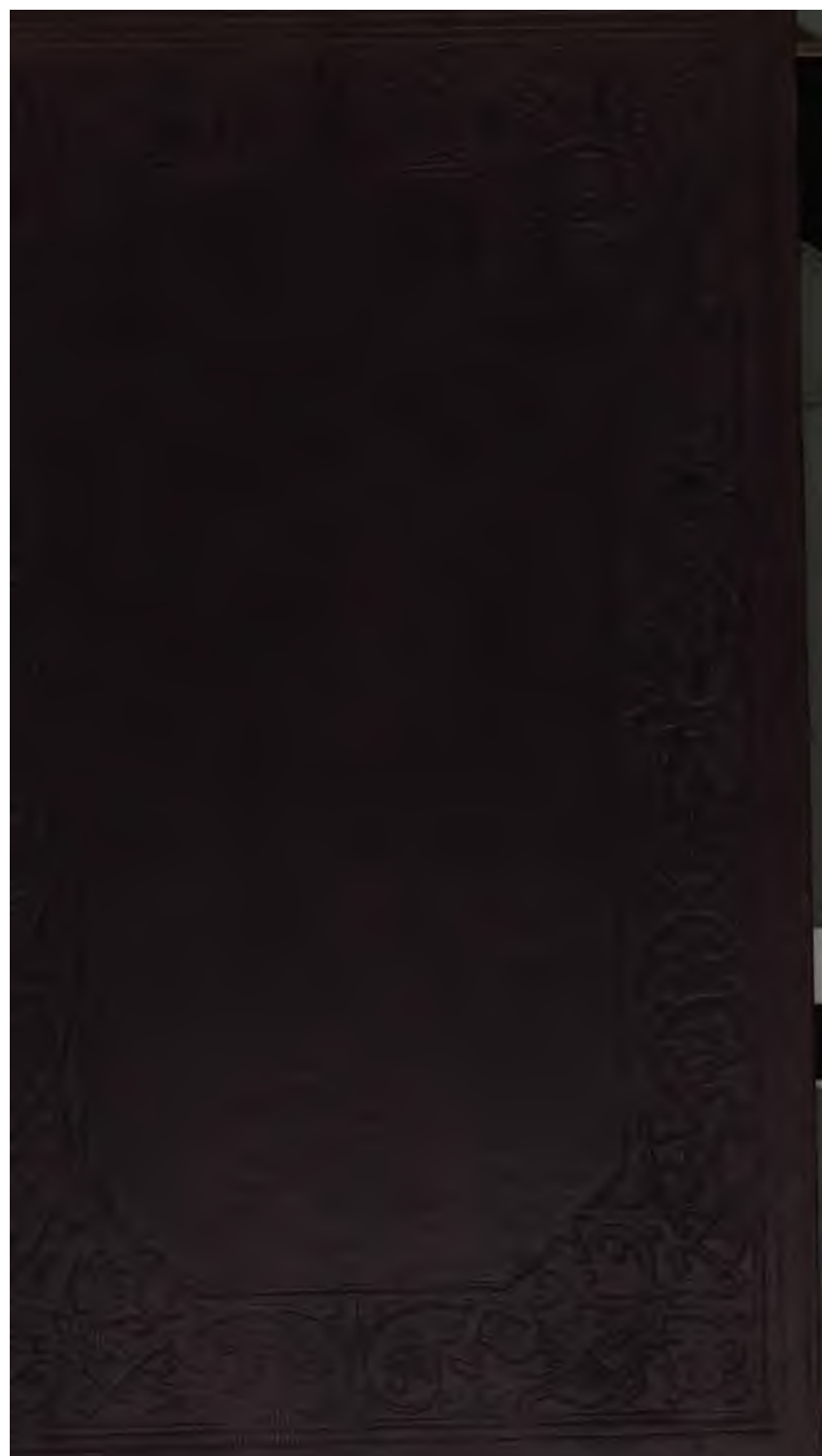
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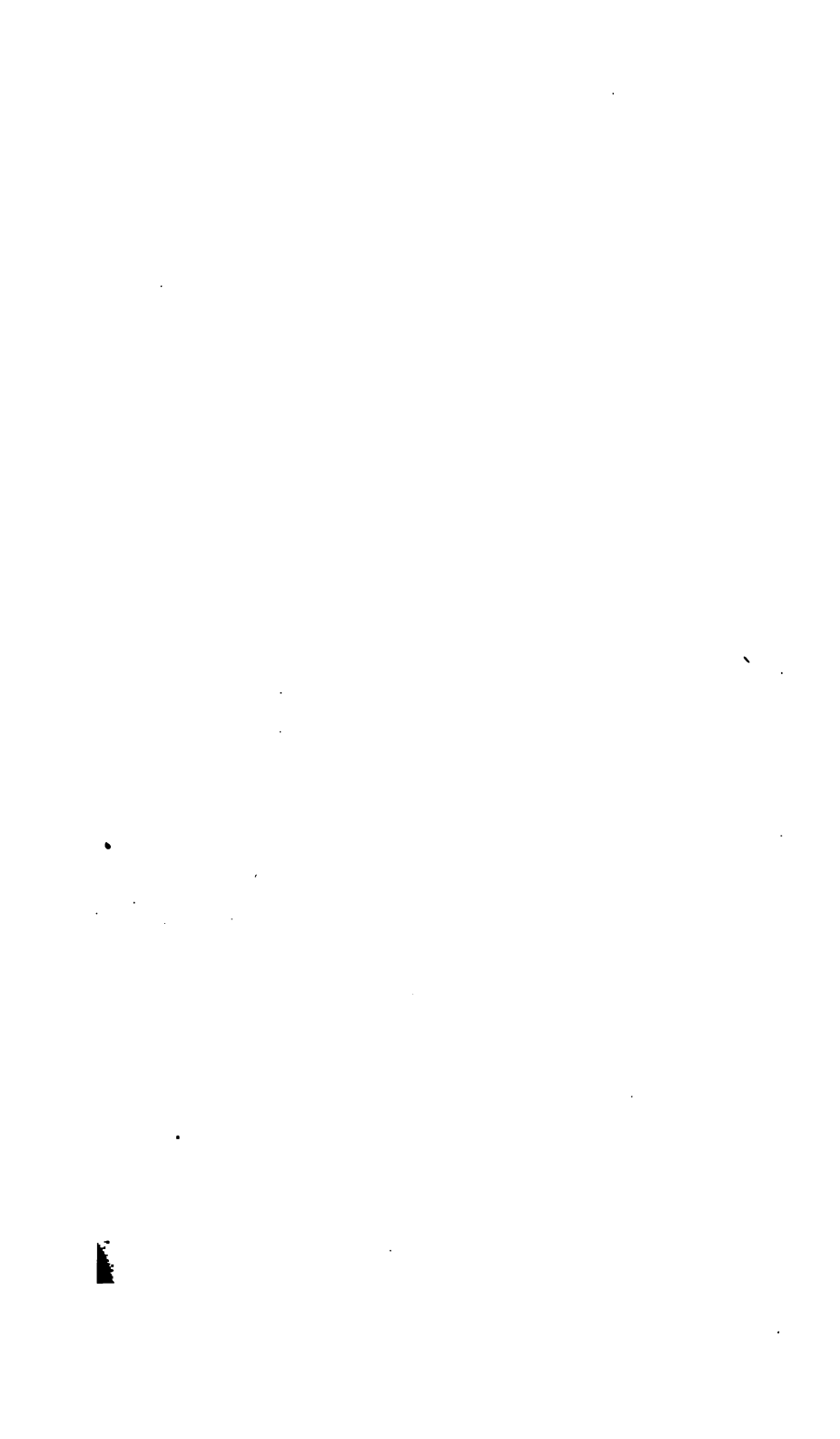
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ALICE WENTWORTH.

"For he through sin's long labyrinth had run,
Nor made atonement when he did amiss;
Had sigh'd to many, though he lov'd but one,
And that lov'd one, alas ! could ne'er be his."

CHILDE HAROLD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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ALICE WENTWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

Vergessene Träume, erlöschene Bilder,
Qualvoll süsse, tauchen hervor!

HEINRICH HEINE.

FARNDEN HALL, which had been for many years the abode of Mrs. Langdale, Sophy Bramstone's mother, under whose care Alice Wentworth and her brothers had grown up, was now again inhabited by the

family to whom it belonged. They were at the sea-side at the present moment ; but both on the plea of old intimacy with them, and also on account of its having been so long her home, Alice Wentworth had the power of going there whenever she pleased ; and therefore it was that Mrs. Thornton was so desirous of her company on the expedition with which she wished to gratify her boys. Uncertainty respecting the time of their visit still prevented her from fixing a day, though everything else was planned.

Farnden was a long drive from Darrell Place ; but then, Cranfield was five miles on the road ; and if Alice would give her cousins breakfast, the horses would have an hour's rest, which would enable them to make out

the other ten miles easily, and reach their destination early enough to give the boys several hours for wandering in the park, rowing on the large pond, *fishing in the small one, eating dinner, &c., and returning to tea at Cranfield, where there would be another rest; after which the whole party would yet be back at Darrell Place not much later than the children's usual bedtime.

But there was a thing that weighed on Mrs. Thornton's anxious mind, and threatened the destruction of the whole expedition—the necessity, namely, of having some grown man of the party, who would undertake to look after the boys; and she was not sure when her nephews William Sandford and Richard

Brooks would be with them ; “ for,” observed she to Alice, “ Arthur is at all events to stay at home ; he says, some one must dine with my uncle, which is true, though I have no doubt that Mr. Fielding would be most happy. Now he (Arthur) would be the very person to make me feel quite at ease, by keeping the boys from getting into mischief ; for they would mind him more than William Sandford, and Richard Brooks is little older than themselves ! But—I do not know why—he seems not to wish to go.

I did not like to press him ; only I must tell him, that if he stays here, I cannot possibly take Charly, much as I should like to have the little fellow of the party ; for

what between the water, and the bows and arrows, I would not for the world have the responsibility of that child without his father. It is not as if you and I and Miss Bennet could be everywhere; and boys, however little, will follow where the bigger ones lead."

From this discourse of her cousin's, Miss Wentworth learnt one thing concerning the proposed excursion, which in a measure lessened her dislike to taking part in it—Arthur Darrell's determination to stay at home. She trusted he would keep to it; and in that confidence, listened with serenity to the expression of the hopes and fears in which Mrs. Thornton fluctuated for about a week.

During this time, Alice encountered Horace Ferrers more than once: first at Darrell Place, a day when she happened to be calling there, and twice out riding. He both times accompanied her to her gate; but on the first occasion, she got rid of him by letting him know that she was going immediately to dress for a dinner-party in the neighbourhood; and on the last she excused herself from entertaining him, by pleading an engagement at the village school, resolving if he followed her there (which he had just discretion enough not to do), to invite herself to drink tea with the clergyman's wife; for she had seen so much of him as to know, that if he once sat down in her drawing-room, it would

be a hard matter to be rid of him before night.

In due time she received a note from Mrs. Thornton, fixing the long-talked-of pic-nic for the following Monday, the young Thorntons having obtained their three days' holiday, and Mr. Sandford and Mr. Brooks being available as their guardians on the occasion. Mrs. Thornton added that she hoped Alice would dine at Darrell Place on the previous Saturday, both to see Edward and Henry, who had spent their whole summer holidays at their grandfather's, and to talk over with her the arrangements for Monday. She accepted; and on arriving, found her cousin Mary beaming with delight at the presence of her sons, boys of twelve and four-

teen, of average good looks and behaviour. Arthur Darrell seemed graver even than usual; so silent and abstracted indeed was he, that Alice was not greatly surprised to hear one of the boys say to the other :

“Cousin Arthur is quite cross. There is no use talking to him about it.”

She sat at dinner between him and her uncle, the two young men Sandford and Brooks being opposite, and general conversation was carried on pretty cheerfully till dessert, when, in honour of the schoolboys—for it was not the habit of the house—all the children appeared. Mrs. Thornton made Edward and Henry sit on each side of her, Cecilia and Mary were established at the

right and left of their Uncle Darrell, Fred Thornton planted himself between his cousins Sandford and Brooks, while Charly migrated from his father to Miss Wentworth, and from Miss Wentworth to his father, till he found it more amusing to enact the part of "little dog," and crawl about under the table.

When he had disappeared, his father, under cover of the confused clatter which had arisen on the children's entrance, observed to Alice in a low voice, "that he could not conceive what made Mary so anxious for his joining the party on Monday; for how he was to hinder school-boys from getting into mischief or danger if they happened to have a mind to it, he was at a loss to imagine. She would do

better to leave the whole thing alone if she thought they were in want of leading-strings."

"I do not think," said Alice, in the same tone, "that she at all expects you ; indeed, she told me you were not going. She is quite satisfied with having William Sandford and Richard—"

"I am glad she is, for then there is no reason why I should put myself out of the way. I conclude it is that pond she is so alarmed about. It is a dangerous place, and I suppose she recollects—"

"Oh," interrupted Alice, in a hurried whisper, "do not speak of that, lest my uncle should hear."

“No, no,” replied Darrell, “he hears nothing; he is talking to William Sandford. But it was a narrow escape we had. I remember as if it were yesterday George Darrell’s pulling me out of the water. Poor fellow! he hazarded his life that day without ever thinking anything of it, then or since; but it was no good turn he did in saving mine!”

A dead silence ensued, during which Alice, painfully struck by her neighbour’s undisguised impatience of his lot, and reminded of other days by his allusion to an accident which had well-nigh proved fatal to him and to her brothers, soon found her thoughts wandering among scenes long gone by, in which the “changed” as well as the

“dead” played their part. But the train of her recollections was interrupted by Darrell’s saying abruptly :

“Well, I am sorry to seem disobliging to Mary, who is kindness itself to me and to Charly ; but to Farnden I cannot and will not go. I hope those it suits may have a pleasant day of it. ”

“I dare say the boys will,” answered Alice ; “and it will be a holiday, too, for Miss Bennet and the little girls. As to poor dear Mary, she will be tired out before she gets there, and will be miserable the whole time, except at the moments when all her children are in sight ; but she could not be more eager about it were it a personal pleasure of her own. In fact,

she would not then be at all eager, for you can hardly say she has any enjoyments that are, strictly speaking, personal."

"She is most unselfish," said Darrell, "and would be very sensible, I believe, if she were not so nervous."

Here the conversation ended, as Mrs. Thornton rose; and she, Alice, and the children adjourned to the drawing-room, where everything concerning hours, conveyances, provisions, &c., for Monday's excursion was discussed, and fixed with a precision which seemed to defy all contingencies save that of a rainy morning.

Alice went home early that night, more

oppressed than ever with the feeling that a visit to Farnden at this time, even without Arthur Darrell, would be a renewal of every sorrow she had known. She passed the next day (Sunday) as usual, and at nine o'clock on Monday morning she stood at her door to receive her cousins as they drove in. First came the larger vehicle, open, but capable of being entirely shut up, containing Mrs. Thornton, Miss Bennet, the little girls, and Fred Thornton; then, when they had alighted, appeared a britschka, which young Brooks, who was about seventeen, enjoyed the honour and glory of driving, Henry Thornton being on the box beside him; and out of this carriage, to Miss Wentworth's surprise, came, not

William Sandford, but Arthur Darrell and Charley, accompanied by Edward Thornton !

There was no time for explanations, and a very hurried greeting passed between her and the whole party, who were soon seated round the breakfast-table. When the first confusion of seating and helping the children was over, she saw that Arthur Darrell was at her right hand, divided from her only by Charly, who had insisted on being close to "dear Aunt Alice."

"Fate is stronger than free-will, you perceive, for here I am," said he. "The first thing I heard this morning was 'that Mrs. Thornton wished particularly to see me.' I

made what haste I could, and as I went across the long passage, I beheld poor Mary at the door of her dressing-room, exclaiming: ‘Oh, Arthur, if you could but take compassion on me!’ It turned out that William Sandford had just received a letter which obliged him to go to town to-day; and Mary, who had chiefly counted on him for her boys’ protection, was so thoroughly disconcerted by his failing her, that I believe she would have given up the whole thing at the last moment, much as it would have cost her, had I not agreed to go in his stead. I could do no less, so must make the best of it.”

“It cannot be helped,” said Alice, “and I hope—” but she could not contrive any

suitable phrase, so she observed "that it was a fine day;" and Darrell answered "that he believed one person not far off was delighted at his change of mind—Master Charly, to wit;" and his opinion was confirmed by the child's expressions of glee.

Breakfast was now soon over. The carriages came round, and Mrs. Thornton was just getting into her's, when the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard coming from the Lodge, and Horace Ferrers rode up, dismounting as he reached the door. He seemed surprized to meet with so large an assemblage, and he slightly apologized for his early visit, on the ground of his never having been fortunate enough to find Miss Wentworth at a later hour. He then addressed

himself to the rest of the party, and learning that they were all on the point of setting out on an expedition to Farnden, declared there was nothing he should enjoy so much, and offered himself as an addition to the company.

Alice had no choice but to say he was welcome; though she saw a nervous fidgetty expression come over Mrs. Thornton's face, and was herself far from pleased at his arrival.

"I don't know if you are aware of the distance," said Arthur Darrell to him, while Miss Wentworth seated herself in the pony chaise; "it is ten miles; and if Haidée has just brought you from Netherbridge—"

"Oh, Haidée could do it on a pinch, and be none the worse. But if both those machines will be full," said he, looking at the landau and britschka, "I dare say Miss Wentworth will mount me—or, rather," added he, turning to her, "let me drive you."

"I had promised Edward Thornton he should drive me," replied Alice.

"Your cousin there?" asked Ferrers. "That is hardly safe!" said he, pushing by the boy. "He will be much better in the britschka." And with no more ado, he jumped into the vacant seat, seized the reins, and, looking over his shoulder, nodded and smiled to Edward Thornton, as he drove off without consulting Miss

Wentworth. The whole was done so quickly, that Alice hardly knew what was settled, when she felt herself already whirled away; and however vexed she might be at the success of her companion's effrontery, she could only resign herself to her fate.

Edward Thornton stood looking on with a blank and amazed countenance, while Arthur Darrell, amused in spite of everything at sight of the boy's rueful visage, said, laughing, to Mrs. Thornton :

" Well, Mary, do not you think my services might be dispensed with, now you have got Ferrers as well as Brooks?"

" My dear Arthur !" exclaimed she, in terror ; " they are more required than ever !

Mr. Ferrers is a connection of your's, and I dare say—I do not mean—but I cannot feel that confidence; he is very lively—rather inconsiderate—quite boyish in spirits; and besides, as you can see plainly (this she added with an appearance of extreme vexation), he will be at Alice's side the whole day; so do come, I beseech you! for I cannot turn back now!”

He hastened to assure her that what he had just said was but in joke, and seated himself without delay in the britschka, with Edward Thornton and Charly.

CHAPTER II.

Hoffnung und Liebe, Alles zertrümmert

HENRICH HEINE.

It was a fine October day, bright and warm for the season, so that the drive, which lay through pretty country, was a pleasant one ; and on reaching the Lodge at Farnden, they entered a beautiful park, undulating, well-wooded, and inhabited by numerous

fallow deer. When the carriages stopped at the house door, Miss Wentworth and Horace Ferrers were standing before it, he in the highest spirits, she looking grave but not displeased; whence Darrell justly concluded that nothing decisive had been attempted during the drive.

It was now a question whether they should in the first instance look over the house, or at once disperse about the grounds; to the elder members of the party it was indifferent; but the children were consulted, and most of them had heard of something or other in the house at Farnden which excited their curiosity. The little girls were anxious to see certain shells; Henry Thornton was desirous of inspecting a picture of wild

beasts, reported to be in one of the drawing-rooms; and Fred eagerly longed to behold a stuffed owl which his mamma had once or twice described to him. It followed that the whole party went in; Darrell giving his arm to Mrs. Thornton, Horace leading Miss Wentworth, and the rest crowding behind or before them as they liked.

Horace had by this time discovered that the place had been Miss Wentworth's residence in childhood and early youth; he therefore asked many questions in a manner meant to express interest, and as this was a line very foreign to that in which he was most used to get over the ground, and consequently one in which he

was glaringly factitious, his company grew more wearisome to her than she had yet found it.

They happened to be standing close to Mrs. Thornton and Arthur, whose eyes Alice saw directed to a part of the drawing-room where her brothers' pictures had formerly hung. She heard him ask his companion in a low voice : " Where they now were ? " But Mrs. Thornton, occupied in watching or in speaking to one of her children, did not hear the question, to which Alice involuntarily replied :

" They are at Cranfield."

" Not in the rooms I have been in !" returned Darrell.

" No ; in my own sitting-room."

"What is at Cranfield?" asked Ferrers.

"Some pictures that used to be here," said Miss Wentworth.

"Then you have been in this house before, have you, Arthur?"

"Yes, in my aunt's life-time," answered Alice for him. "I think," continued she, addressing Mrs. Thornton, "that the children have now seen all that can interest them in the house, and that we may as well go out into the grounds at once."

She and Horace were accordingly leading the way into the hall when Fred Thornton exclaimed:

"But I have not seen the owl, mamma, where is the owl?" While Charly echoed in a yet shriller note, "Where is the owl?"

"Where is it, Alice?" asked Mrs. Thornton.

"It was in the little third room, I think," replied she, "but no—it is not there; I am afraid I have forgotten its place. I wish we could find it! Where can that owl be?"

"It used to be in the school-room," said Darrell.

"Yes; I remember," replied Alice, "I dare say it is there now!"

"Is that the school-room?" asked Ferrers, pointing to a door on the right.

"No," answered his brother-in-law, "it is a little room to the left, down two steps."

Into the little room to the left the whole

band walked to ascertain if it were still tenanted by the stuffed owl, Horace exclaiming! "Why, he knows every inch of the house!" and Charly asking, as he looked up in Miss Wentworth's face, "if papa once lived there too?" for he understood that Farnden had been "Aunt Alice's" home.

Arthur Darrell, with Mrs. Thornton still leaning on his arm, and surrounded by a troop of children and young people, who all talked at once, while they opened this cupboard and that book-case, or crowded to stare at the large white owl in its glass case over the mantle-piece, now stood silent and apparently unconscious of all that was passing, for his thoughts had flown, or to speak more

properly, had transported him body and soul into those happiest times of his existence which had been passed in that very room.

The room itself was unaltered, for no one had thought it worth while to make any change in the furniture or arrangements of so insignificant an apartment, and it remained in appearance exactly the same as when he and Alice were first play-fellows, then lovers, then a betrothed pair. Horace inquired "whether Miss Wentworth had a very affectionate remembrance of this studious retreat? whether she had had a strict governess? whether Darrell used to help or disturb her at her lessons?" Luckily, he was more given to ask questions than

anxious respecting the answers he received. But Charly, who had never obtained any reply to the inquiry he had made, was more pertinacious in his curiosity ; and pulling his father's coat by way of forcing him out of his abstraction, he said gravely :

“ Did you live here, papa, with Aunt Alice ? and was the owl alive then ? ”

The speech occasioned a general laugh, but it ran a risk of obtaining no more answer than his former query, had not Mrs. Thorton replied calmly :

“ No, my dear, but he used to come here sometimes.”

“ To play with Aunt Alice ? ” asked Cissy Thornton.

“Papa and Aunt Alice play!” cried Charly, opening his eyes wide at the notion of two such tall and authoritative persons having ever played.

“Well, Fred,” said Miss Wentworth, “I think we have seen enough of the owl now; suppose we go into the garden,” and taking the little boy by the hand, she left the room, followed by the rest of the party.

Once out of doors, Horace would fain have led his companion to a distance from the others; but as she felt she had barely contrived by dint of considerable generalship, to keep clear of a declaration in the course of the drive from Cranfield, she now took care never to go many paces from Mrs.

Thornton and Miss Bennet, though the path was so narrow, and the gentleman so determined to monopolize her, that the appearance of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* could not be avoided. When the boys announced that they were going to the large piece of water to have a row in the boat, Arthur Darrell and young Brooks left the ladies to accompany them thither, and she recommended Ferrers to follow.

“What, you think,” said he, “that the boat will be the safer for *my* being in it? But you see, though I may be born for the other thing, it does not follow I should save the rest. No, no; I can tell when I am well off, and shall not trouble them or the boat, unless you would like a row, would you?”

“Oh no, thank you,” said Alice, whose mind reverted to many a summer’s day of old when she had steered that very boat while rowed by his brother-in-law. “I am getting tired,” continued she, “as I see my cousin is already,” and she immediately proposed to Mrs. Thornton that they should seat themselves in a summer-house near at hand.

Horace found himself so inexpressibly wearied both by the restraint which Mrs. Thornton’s presence imposed, and by the harmless insipidity of her conversation, that he was fain to wander about with the governess and the little girls, till their mother, who perhaps thought Miss Bennet might be more entertained than benefited by his at-

tentions, called them all three into the summer-house, "lest they should be overtired."

"I never saw such a forward young man as that Mr. Ferrers!" whispered she to Alice. "I wonder poor Arthur bears with him so well as he does! It must be a great trial."

The time seemed endless to Miss Wentworth, but yet it passed. Two o'clock came, the whole party re-assembled, and sat down to dinner, which occupied something more than an hour; and that business being accomplished, they separated again towards different points. There was a remarkable view to be seen from a certain mound, there were gold and silver pheasants somewhere

else, and rare flowers in the green-house for the delight of those who prized them.

Horace Ferrers, who had been successful in placing himself by Miss Wentworth at dinner, never moved from her side ; and she was soon after vexed to perceive, at a turn in the walk, that Mrs. Thornton had vanished ; but her annoyance was relieved, and her solitary conversation interrupted by the sound of a little voice exclaiming rather piteously :

“ Aunt Alice, where is papa gone ? ”

Charly was, by this time, unconsciously wearied by a day so unlike those he usually spent ; he felt strange and unprotected with the elder Thorntons and

young Brooks, among whom he had been roaming about since dinner, (having got separated from Miss Bennet's flock), and he anxiously repeated his question, "Where is papa?"

"I cannot tell you, dear," said Alice; "but we will look for him." And taking his hand, she struck into a path well known to her, by which she purposed, not to seek Arthur Darrell, whom she believed to be probably with Mrs. Thornton, but to avoid Horace Ferrers, in which intention she would hardly have succeeded had he not been called on, at the same moment, to decide a point at issue between Brooks and Henry Thornton concerning the merits of a pony grazing in a neighbouring field.

Alice, in the meantime, wandered away with her little friend towards a retired nook, where she thought she might remain undisturbed for a space.

“Your papa must be somewhere nearer the house, Charly,” said she. “We shall find him when we go back; but I think you are quite happy with me—are you not?”

Charly did not deny it, and she strolled on, looking with admiration on the wide-spreading beeches, whose hue was indeed changed, but whose foliage was yet unthinned by autumn, and intending to rest herself on a seat to be found (as she knew) at the foot of one of the stately trees somewhat farther on.

"What is that, Aunt Alice?" cried her companion, pointing to a dark object on the ground a little to their right.

"I do not know, Charley," said she, "but we will go nearer, and find out."

On advancing a few steps in that direction, she saw that it was a man—some wanderer, as she supposed, lying on his face, apparently asleep; and she was turning back into the footpath, when Charly, who had drawn nearer to the recumbent figure, called out at the top of his voice:

"Come here—come here, Aunt Alice!"

She went towards him, but what was her amazement when, at one and the same moment, the child cried out: "It's

papa!" and Arthur Darrell rose from the ground, his hair and dress soiled and disordered, his face exhibiting every token of violent emotion, now showing the more wildly from the anger which kindled his eyes, as he said, in a voice choked with passion :

"This is not like you ! To come and spy out the misery that would fain hide itself !"

"Spy !" repeated Alice, in a tone of as much sorrow as surprise ; " but I will not burden you with my presence any longer." And she walked away with quick steps, though her whole frame trembled with agitation.

She passed the seat she had meant to be

her resting-place, and was proceeding to make the best of her way back to the house by a straighter path than that by which she had come, when she was detained by a pull given to her gown; and on looking round, saw Charly, who said, gazing at her with an alarmed and eager countenance :

“Do come back, Aunt Alice! Papa is sorry!”

She stooped down and kissed him, but said :

“I must go on to the house, dear Charly, — your papa wishes to be alone.”

“But he is so sorry!” persisted the child.

“Do come back !”

“ Did your papa tell you to ask me ? ”

“ He wants you — he is so very sorry ! ”

This was no distinct message ; but she could not resist the affectionate look and imploring tone. She turned back ; and when she had gone a few steps with him, she saw his father seated on the bench, his arms folded, and looking gloomily before him.

“ Aunt Alice is come ! ” cried Charly.

Darrell lifted up his eyes, and rose, while Miss Wentworth said, with a deep blush :

“ I hardly know if I understood Charly— if I have done rightly in coming with him, ”

"Rightly!" exclaimed Darrell. "I do not know, but you are doing kindly and generously, if you are come, as I trust, to grant pardon—to make peace."

"I could come for nothing else," answered she.

"I should not have dared to ask it," was his reply, as he grasped her hand eagerly, and held it long in his. "Then if we are friends," continued he, "sit down with Charly and me for two minutes before we go and join those people."

She did so. He sat down beside her, and Charly soon squeezed himself in between them, fixing his eyes in a somewhat bewildered manner alternately on his father and on Miss Wentworth. It may have occurred

to him that the scene he had been witnessing was a specimen of what he had lately learnt with some surprise—namely, that grown-up people were naughty sometimes. They sat in silence which the child was too much awed to break, till Darrell, leaning his head against the trunk of the large tree round which the bench was fixed, said, as he looked up into its thick branches :

“ I was ashamed, and therefore angry ; but have only given myself the more cause for shame, since it is worse to suspect and reproach a friend, than to yield one’s self up, even over passionately, to the bitter sense of what one is, and what one has been—what one might have been.”

"There are few, if any," replied Alice, with a slightly tremulous voice, "on whom that feeling does not weigh painfully when brought strongly to their minds by the sight of objects recalling the aspirations of youth."

"Few, I dare say," answered he; "but if that feeling weighs on those whose lives have been as innocent as the human state permits, into what abyss, think you, must they be crushed, who look back on nothing but duties despised, laws of God and man broken, happiness thrown away, kindness repaid with—"

"I think," interrupted Alice, "that such persons, whatever their past life may have been, ought never to despair; but to look

upward for help and consolation. Even supposing their earthly happiness to be as fully destroyed as they believe ; it is wrong to despair."

"Wrong? Yes—perhaps so ; but how should I, for instance, look farther upward, when I see what I now see?—what *you* see?"

And he directed Alice's attention to the names of herself, her brothers, her cousin Sophy, and his own, all carved more or less rudely in the bark of the tree which shaded them.

"My eyes are as open as yours," said Alice, sorrowfully, "to those remembrances ; but we must all bear our lot : and you have something even here below to look to and

consider.” (She glanced at the child as she spoke.) “And though I am far from refusing allowance to such feelings as this place awakens, it is not well to yield to them in presence of one who depends on you for everything.”

“It is true,” answered Darrell, “and I will yield no more.—How still it is in this wood! how different to the noise and turmoil we have escaped from!”

“It is most delightful—most refreshing,” said Alice, “but I am afraid we must soon rejoin the rest—it is growing late; and I believe we had better go now.”

As she spoke, she rose:—her example was followed by her companions, who walked with her slowly, and almost in silence, out

of the little wood, or rather thicket, into the opener parts of the park, and thence to the garden, where they found the other ladies, and the little Thorntons. Mrs. Thornton said it was past five, the sun would set before long, and she had sent her elder boys to hurry the servants, and have the carriages round as soon as possible. Horace Ferrers shortly appeared, exclaiming at sight of Darrell and Miss Wentworth :

“Now where have you two been all this time ?”

“Down there under the beeches,” said Alice, calmly.

Horace looked at his brother-in-law in a more scrutinizing manner than was his

wont ; but before he could draw any conclusion from the examination of his countenance, Mrs. Thornton begged Darrell to be so kind as to go and order the landau to be shut, and the hood of the britschka to be put up ; “ for,” as she observed, “ it had turned quite cold within the last few minutes.”

Ferrers now tried some jokes with his nephew ; but Charly happened to be in one of what his uncle called his “ muffish humours,” and no fun at all could be had out of him. The carriages came round, and Alice, whose mind had been till then occupied by what she had so lately seen and heard in the park, was now struck for the first time by the recollection of the

extremely unpleasant drive home that awaited her, unless she could fight off Horace Ferrers' companionship in the pony-chaise.

She was on the point of announcing that she intended to be driven home by her cousin Edward, when his mother, to whom it would seem that the same thought occurred at the same moment, got out of the landau before she was well in it, desired the governess and children to place themselves, and hastening up to Miss Wentworth, said aloud, with all the energy with which her horror of Mr. Ferrers inspired her :

"My dear Alice, I cannot let you go home in that open pony-chaise this chill

evening: it would make me miserable; you must not think of it. I do not ask you into the landau because I am obliged to be so particular in not exposing the children to the night-air, and Miss Bennet is so ill wrapped up. But do get into the britschka: with the hood and apron you will be protected."

Alice complied instantly, and the place next her was immediately occupied by Arthur Darrell, who said to Ferrers on his coming up as if to follow him;

"No, Horace, there is not room, for the apron is wanted—Edward Thornton must drive you, or you drive him in the pony-chaise. It will be all we can do to stuff Charly in," added he, as the child

was lifted into the carriage by one of his cousins.

Horace turned his back, muttering to himself in great vexation, "that if he was a cool hand, as Arthur called him, he knew a cooler—and a devilish deal slyer one too." But there was nothing for it, and he even got into the phaeton with Edward, while Henry Thornton sat on the box of the britschka with Brooks, and Mrs. Thornton established herself in the close carriage, with the satisfaction of having disposed her flock in the most desirable manner, and of having baffled Mr. Ferrers. Darrell and Miss Wentworth sat long without speaking; Charly was tired and cross, consequently very troublesome, and dissatisfied wherever

he was placed. At last he laid himself at full length across his father and Miss Wentworth, and nestling under her shawls, he shortly fell asleep, his head just peeping above the apron. As soon as he was quiet, Alice leant back in the carriage with a sigh of fatigue and relief.

“You seem very tired,” said Darrell, “and that boy is no feather—I shall wake him, and make him sit up.”

“Pray don’t,” replied she: “he is wearied out, poor child, and I am perfectly comfortable, resting at last.”

“I am glad you are,” said he; “you deserve some rest.” And he relapsed into silence which Alice was not inclined to break. The sun set soon after they drove

out of Farnden, and the twilight was deepening as they came to a turn in the road, on passing which, Darrell asked "if that was the Kingsley Lane?"

"No," said she, "we have not reached that yet; we have a good way to go still, and I am afraid you will find the drive very long."

"No, I shall not; I wish it could last longer, it is the first endurable hour of this day. If I had looked forward to six hours at Farnden, no consideration would have brought me to England!"

"I am sorry," said she, replying less to his words than to the thoughts which prompted them, "that you have had to encounter what seems unnecessary pain. But there is

much laid on all of us which is in our own eyes unnecessary, which we must nevertheless endure; and the burden falls less heavily on those who accept with fortitude, than on those who struggle weakly."

"I understand you," he answered, with repressed anger, "I understand perfectly; and I have only what I deserve in being reproached with womanish impatience, when I am spiritless enough to complain, and to complain to Alice Wentworth!"

"God knows I did not mean to reproach!" said Alice, earnestly, but in a subdued tone, "I have neither the right nor the wish. But when I see unhappiness which I should be glad were lessened, is it not natural I should

point to what I believe to be the only means for its alleviation? If I chose my words so ill as to convey an idea that could wound, I am grieved at my want of skill, for my intention, I cannot be."

"My dear Alice," he began, melted by the softness of manner with which her reproof was explained, and forgetful of everything but the present impulse—when a sudden start Miss Wentworth gave, recalled him to the necessity of controlling himself, and he said hurriedly, though with less vehemence, "I beg your pardon, but either I must express coldly the gratitude I feel for so much kindness and undeserved forbearance, or, if I attempt to speak as my heart prompts, I run risk of appearing regardless of what I bear in

mind most constantly. What shall I—what can I say?”

“Say nothing,” returned Alice, “I am sure that you understand me.”

“I do,” replied he, “I understand you, and I thank you.”

As he spoke the last words, he took hold of her hand and would have retained it, but she disengaged it gently, saying in a whisper:

“We have nearly wakened poor Charly; we must not disturb him any more.”

“I may well be content,” answered Darrell, “with silence that is peace.” And both leaned back as at first, without uttering a word till the carriage stopped before the Lodge-gate at Cranfield. Charly waked

instantly, but was more inclined to cry than to feel amused at being taken out into the well-lighted hall of "Aunt Alice's" house, into which all the party were now flocking.

The tea (as it was called, though it included an ample dinner for the men and bigger boys), was not so pleasant a meal as the breakfast in the same place had been. Except Horace and the two elder Thorntons, every one seemed overdone and wearied, Mrs. Thornton particularly; and a horror lest her boys should be "infected" by Ferrers' company being superadded to her own fatigue, she soon grew very impatient to depart with her whole train. But on recollecting that Alice would then be left literally alone with

this dangerous individual (whose propensity to stay where he was, when in good quarters, had been made known to her by her uncle), she asked Arthur Darrell *sotto voce*, "if he would have any objection to remain behind, just to stay while Mr. Ferrers did. Only," added she, "I do not know how to get you home."

"As to that," replied Darrell, "I know my way blindfold across the fields to my uncle's; so do not trouble yourself. I will see him out of the house, you may rely on it; but I may be late."

"Oh, thank you, I am quite at ease now. Otherwise I could not answer it to myself, if I went away," said Mrs. Thornton, and having provided a protector for Alice, she pro-

ceeded to gather her chickens around her, including Charly, who was deposited in the close carriage with his little cousins, and presently drove off, followed by the other young people in the britschka. Horace gave no token of moving; he eat, drank, talked in the highest spirits, and asserted "that if the day had been pleasant, this wind-up of it, now they were quit of schoolboys and babies, was pleasanter still."

He praised Miss Wentworth's house, horses, wine, everything; and seemed in better hopes of possessing them all himself, than one would have supposed the events of the day could have entitled him to be. Had he been sentimentally in love with the lady, her conduct at Farnden might have given

rise to something like despondency ; but, though he admired her person considerably, he was no ways agitated by the doubts and fears which might have troubled the mind of one whose feelings were more engaged. Her avoiding his company occasionally that day was set down to an exaggerated awe of her relations ; in which, as well as in one or two other narrow prejudices, he concluded that she had had the misfortune to be brought up ; and it in no degree altered his conviction that, left to herself, and unchecked by the presence of Mrs. Thornton or her uncle Alice Wentworth, a single woman past eight-and-twenty, unattended at the present moment by any more distinguished suitor, must necessarily accept with delight

so handsome and high-born a man of six-and-twenty, as the Honourable Horace Ferrers.

Strong in this belief, he remained at the table, without apparently noticing Miss Wentworth's fatigue or Darrell's silence. The hour was in truth not late, though it seemed so at the end of such a long day ; and Alice was wearied to that degree that she would not have hesitated to retire but for the dread lest, if she used no ceremony, Horace might so far follow her example as to make himself at home where he was, and keep Arthur Darrell and her household up till some unheard-of hour. She therefore remained at her post ; but could not refrain from casting a look at Darrell, which he

rightly understood to mean, "rid me of him at any price !" and he immediately said to his brother-in-law :

"Horace, it is time you and I were on our way home ; I will tell them to bring Haidée round."

"Why, it is quite early !" exclaimed Horace. "Miss Wentworth does not keep older fashioned hours than your uncle ?"

"It may be early," answered the other, "but you see how tired Miss Wentworth is. I have rung for your horse, and we really must go the moment she is at the door."

"There is no swearing to such things," cried Horace, fixing his eyes on his hos-

tess, "but if one might trust to looks, I should say that Miss Wentworth was at this moment quite up to just such another expedition."

"Then I am afraid looks are very deceitful, Mr. Ferrers," replied she; "for I *am* tired, which must serve as my excuse for neither entertaining you any longer nor even begging you to entertain each other till I could receive you in the drawing-room."

After this, Horace was unable to resist the ordering round of his steed; but he cast an angry glance at Darrell, and drank one or two more glasses of wine in the interval that ensued before Haidée was announced. At last Mr. Ferrers' horse was at the door.

"Come, Horace, we must really be off," said Darrell.

"I suppose we must, as you are determined on it," answered he, with a sulky look very unusual to him; but he nevertheless rose, and reluctantly bidding farewell to Miss Wentworth, left the room with his brother-in-law.

Ferrers mounted, and walking his horse up to the Lodge so as to speak to Darrell, who was by his side, again reproached him bitterly with breach of engagement, "for," repeated he, "you promised not to hinder if you did not help."

Darrell replied that he was only doing what he knew to be Miss Wentworth's wish.

"Her wish! how do you know?" asked

Ferrers. "Don't talk to me about *her* wishes, when I see it's your own to keep her as much to yourself as you can!"

"You know, Horace, what I told you when you last spoke to me in that strain," said Darrell, with apparent coolness. "I have not stood in your way, whatever you may think ; but if you repeat what you have just said, you know well that I *can* do so, and if you tempt me too far, I will."

Horace did know that his brother-in-law was in possession of sundry facts concerning him, the publication of which he was aware would not help his views ; and notwithstanding the irritable excitement which impelled him, he stopped short of a quarrel,

saying in a tone between sullenness and arrogance, "that he did not suppose he had lost all his chances because he was turned out at nine o'clock that night," and wishing Darrell "a pleasant walk to his uncle's, if indeed 'he were going there," he galloped off.

Arthur Darrell now retraced his steps, for he could not reach the path which led homeward through the fields without crossing the garden. As he went by the house, he saw a light in the library, and Alice's figure flitting by the windows: he slackened his pace as he passed, then stopped a moment at the glass door. She opened it, exclaiming:

"Is he gone?"

"Yes, gone—a mile on the Netherbridge road by this time," replied he, entering the room as he spoke.

"Many, many thanks for seeing him off. I am truly glad to know he is gone," said Alice, who now expected her remaining guest to take his leave; but instead of doing so, he lingered, and shutting the door behind him, said, with a little hesitation :

"I will not stay a moment—but—could you show me those pictures?"

Alice made no immediate reply, but she desired lights to be taken to her sitting-room, and then said :

"If you will come with me, you shall see them."

She led the way to a small room, where she spent the greater part of her time when alone, and where her various occupations were carried on. The light of a bright fire gleamed upon her book-case, her work-table, her drawings; but it was not until the lamps were brought in that Darrell beheld the likenesses of his early friends, such as they were, at the ages of seventeen and eighteen.

“If you sit here,” said Alice, “you will be in the right place to see them. Do you still think them like?”

He did not answer; but presently said, looking round on her:

“I now perceive what I never could in

those days, though the elder people noticed it —your likeness to Edward; and yet, how striking it is!"

Alice's eyes filled with tears; but she said, with a firm voice.

"Within these two or three last years I have thought so myself; I do not think it existed, at least it was very slight in old times; but the expression of my face has changed and has come nearer to what his was. I am well pleased that it has done so."

Darrell looked mournfully from the picture to her, and from her to the picture.

"I am not acting up to the advice I gave Ferrers," said he, "but I am going this

moment. I want but one look more at them. Melancholy as it is—most melancholy—there is a kind of pleasure in the sight—though there would have been none in seeing them in their old places to-day in that crowd and bustle. I shall know now where they are; and where—”

He did not utter the words which, in his mind finished the sentence; but sat on and on, till his hostess began to feel a sort of uneasiness creep over her, which was not lessened by the long and earnest gaze he fixed on her from time to time, as he asked her questions, in themselves indifferent; such as, “Whether she sat in that room both winter and summer? Whether she had ever taken any copies of her brothers’ pictures?”

Whether the Bramstones would visit her that year?"

He grew silent at last; his look and attitude were like those of a man who was breathing from some heavy toil, or painful exertion, and Alice could not bear to disturb the comparative peace he seemed to be enjoying under her roof, though she could no longer doubt of what was smouldering beneath. At length, as if urged by the very repugnance she felt to doing it, she said, in a low and gentle voice:

"Do not think me unkind, but we ought to remember how nervous Mary Thornton is apt to become, when any inmate of the house is out later than she has expected; for her sake, I really must send you home."

“You have been only too kind in letting me stay so long,” said Darrell, starting up. “I am glad I have seen the pictures, seen the room! Good-night—you are very pale, very weary; what was I thinking of in lingering here? You have had a hard day,” added he, fixing an anxious look on her, as he pressed rather than shook her hand, “I hope I am forgiven for my share in its annoyances,” and having thus bid farewell, he walked hastily out of the room, and out of the house.

No sooner was he gone than Alice gave way to the united effects of bodily fatigue and mental agitation in floods of tears which she could scarcely stop when they once began to stream down. She felt no desire or

capability of sleep or repose ; but walked ceaselessly up and down the small apartment.

“ So I have turned my old playfellow from my hearth !” said she to herself, “ turned him from it when he was lulled, tranquillized, if but for a moment. How could I ? But I did rightly—what place has he by my fire-side ? Has he not chosen a home of his own to enjoy, if he will ? What is it to me that he is miserable ? Has he not deserved misery ? Why should those looks of his go to my very heart ? Is he not weak, faithless, changeful, void of all real good, though able to feel and sometimes to imitate its shadow ? True, he loved me in boyhood—but then in youth he gave himself up to debasing vice,

and was parted from me by his fault though not by his will. In manhood, he bewailed that fault; but with the words of penitence on his lips, he renounced me by his own lawless act; and now in riper age—but this time *I* must cut the links of the chain, which chance and circumstance have flung over us, temporarily entwining the fate of two whom no lawful tie can now bind. The fire has not blazed forth; but it has shot out such sparks this day as only wilful blindness could hide from my eyes. I must see him no more. No more, at least, where he can have freedom to look and speak as he has looked and spoken to-day. What is it to me?—but the remembrances of old times melt me; break down all resolution to treat him with

the cold scorn he would have justly earned, had vice and weakness their just reward from me. I cannot trample on one who is already shamed, desponding, crushed, conscious that he has won for himself the punishment that presses on him. No, I can make no change; but I will escape from the torment—I thank God that I have the power! And he shall never know what it was for me to sit beside him under the old tree at Farnden; to draw my hand out of his when we had made peace on our way hither.”

She at length retired to seek for rest, of which it was long before she could taste. Next morning, she wrote to Mrs. Fitzgerald, asking her to take a house

for her at Brighton, as near as she could to herself, and as speedily as was in her power.

CHAPTER III.

Nein ! länger werd' ich diesen Kampf nicht kämpfen,
Den Riesen-Kampf der Pflicht !
Kannst du des Herzens Flammen-Trieb nicht dämpfen,
So fordre, Tugend, dieses Opfer nicht !"

SCHILLER'S KAMPF.

ON the day following the Farnden expedition, the whole party at Darrell Place seemed smitten with unusual dulness. The schoolboys took their departure early in the morning, and their mother was out of spirits

in consequence. The children were more impatient of their lessons, and less contented in their plays than in the common course of things; Arthur Darrell looked more moody than he had done since the first days after Miss Wentworth's departure, hardly taking notice of any one but Charly; and his uncle wore a careful expression on his brow, which was increased rather than lessened after a conversation he had with Mr. Fielding, the clergyman, whose visits had generally the effect of pleasing and enlivening him.

On the succeeding morning, however, the family had recovered from the flatness apparently consequent upon the party of pleasure; but the master of the house still

looked graver than his wont, and his nephew asked Mrs. Thornton if she thought anything had occurred to discompose him.

“Nothing that I know of,” answered she; “nothing in the world, unless it were, that on consideration he thinks more of something I suggested yesterday than he would allow at the time; but I hardly suppose that, for he has so little opinion of my judgment.”

Mrs. Thornton had somewhat a mysterious look in making this reply; but as her cousin knew she often attached importance to very uninteresting trifles, he inquired no farther, and was preparing to go out shooting, when he was invited to accompany

Mr. Darrell on a drive in his phaeton. He complied with the request, and on asking as they set off whither they were bound, was told "to Cranfield," which rather surprised him, as, though there was in fact nothing remarkable in Mr. Darrell's visiting his niece, he was more in the habit of being visited by her, and he rarely if ever accompanied Mrs. Thornton when she called on Alice.

"You will not mind, Arthur," said he, "being left to your own devices for twenty minutes or so in the garden, or in the library while I talk a little business with my niece. When that time is over, you will join us, and we shall not stay long after."

He was then silent for a while, but soon continued as follows :

“She is a very sensible girl—sensible woman, I should say now, for all she is in my eyes as handsome as ever. Yet there is a singular inclination to extremes in women, be they wise or foolish—as I was saying to Childers when he and I dined *tête-à-tête* on Monday, and he was wondering—but that is neither here nor there,” concluded he, rather abruptly, for it struck him just in time that Mr. Childers’s wonderings, which were occasioned by Miss Wentworth’s single state, and the suspiciousness which was supposed to account for it, could not be suitably retailed to the man whose conduct ten years back might well have

contributed to produce that frame of mind in her.

Arthur Darrell gave it as his opinion that Miss Wentworth possessed an exceedingly good and clear understanding.

“She does, she does,” answered his uncle; “and what is more to the purpose, she has the temper to listen to those who differ from her in their views; which enables one to be of use to her, when one would otherwise say to one’s self, ‘she must take her own course—must settle her affairs her own way.’”

Darrell secretly wondered what kind of difference of views his uncle purposed to discuss with Miss Wentworth, but no explanation was given, and they drove on,

conversing on various indifferent subjects.

When they reached Cranfield Lodge, Mr. Darrell went straight to Alice's sitting-room, leaving his nephew in the library, which opened on the garden. He remained there for some time, less occupied by considering what might be the nature of his uncle's visit, than by going over in his mind every look, every tone of Alice Wentworth's face and voice, in her conversations with him at Farnden; on the road from it; in her own house afterwards; and in endeavouring to deduce from their expression, what might be the exact amount of interest—pity—sympathy—which he might, without self-flattery, believe they implied. But this led him into

such a field of perturbing and heart-piercing conjectures, as threatened to become unbearable; and he walked out into the grounds, to see if a change of outward objects might turn the current of the thoughts he could not control.

He made the tour of the garden; and as he came back towards the front of the house, saw his brother-in-law ride up. Ferrers walked out to him:

"I understand Miss Wentworth is at home, is she not here?"

"She is. But my uncle is sitting with her, talking over some business."

"When can he be alone himself?" you ask. "He is," answered Howard. "A moment since, he was in having it is! and

are you forced to amuse yourself with the beauties of nature meanwhile? I should go and give a look at the stables in your place, it would be better than mooning about here. Just tell me the way to them, or to the kitchen-garden, or any-where; that I may hide till the old fellow is gone; for my coming forward to say civil things as he goes, would be great loss of time both for him and me."

"Nonsense, Horace!" said Darrell. "I have no doubt the servants have said you are here already. I was to join them in about half an hour, and more than that time has passed; so come in with me."

"I suppose I must," replied Ferrers;

"but I am cursedly unlucky in always meeting more than what I reckon for;" and muttering these last words, he followed Darrell into the sitting-room, out of which the latter had torn himself with so much difficulty on the evening of the Farnden expedition. Miss Wentworth's whole air and manner, as she received them, verged more upon what might be called embarrassment, or even confusion, than was at all usual with her, a circumstance which Ferrers did not fail to interpret in a manner favourable to his own aspirations.

Mr. Darrell behaved with the formal politeness he always observed towards him; but a glow of emotion seemed to light upon his face, and all the while he was Miss Whit-

more, a young lady of the neighbourhood whom Alice had invited to luncheon, and who was afterwards to ride with her. On her appearance, but not till then, Mr. Darrell took his leave; while his nephew said to himself "that Horace was balked of his opportunity once more; consequently would live so much the longer in his fool's Paradise." He thought his uncle looked graver, more annoyed, than when they left home; and both sat for a good while in silence, which was broken by Mr. Darrell's saying :

"Arthur, I don't know, after all, why I should not tell you what is in my mind at this moment; and I have the less scruple, as I think I shall not hurt you

by giving my opinions plainly about Mr. Ferrers."

"You need be under no restraint in that respect," replied his nephew. "My intimacy with him is one caused by circumstances, not choice."

"I dare say," said Mr. Darrell, "and I have no wish to make observations on his general character just now ; but the present point is that neither I nor any of our family can possibly have any satisfaction in seeing his endeavours to make himself agreeable to Alice Wentworth."

"Of course you cannot ; he has had the folly to expose his extraordinary presumption, and it will before long find its own punishment ; but I confess I had rather not

have been so situated, as to be obliged in a manner to give him the means of displaying it."

"Oh, you could not help yourself, Arthur! I never for a second blamed you. Nor did I, to speak truth, care much in what way he made a fool of himself, nor share Mary Thornton's wrath at noticing his manner to Alice the first time she saw him in her company at my house. But I have been more annoyed these last few days. Alice is sensible, steady, has a well-regulated mind—when Mary talked to me about the danger and disadvantage of her letting such a man come near her, I gave the whole thing the go-by; not only from thinking that women always do mischief when they meddle, or

get you to meddle for them in such matters, but because I really could not understand there being any peril for Alice in the flattery of such an empty fellow. Mary talked to me again the night before last of her vexation at Alice's not keeping him so much at a distance as she might; letting him drive her over to Farnden, stick to her while there, sit by her at dinner, monopolize her. I told her Alice was too much used to the sort of thing—too much a woman of the world—to attach importance to his folly, or think it necessary to give any decided rebuff. But yesterday when I saw Mr. Fielding he told me, what I was not at all aware of, that he had met my niece twice, at least, riding with Mr. Ferrers, and no one else

but her groom ; and I confess that startled me a good deal—for Alice is clever at avoiding what she really dislikes ; and I could hardly understand how it could occur against her will. I did not cross-question Fielding ; that could serve no good purpose, and he had mentioned it quite simply. He is not the least of a gossip you know ; which made me remark the fact the more. But I thought I could do no harm by just asking a few plain questions of Alice herself, without saying anything to Mary ; and I have done so—I wish I could say I felt satisfied by her answers.”

“ Why,” said his nephew, “ it is not possible Miss Wentworth should think of Horace Ferrers otherwise than as a very presuming admirer !”

“I should have said not ; but there is no fathoming women’s caprices ; and I do not deny that all she *said* to me was just what I could have wished—what I should have expected. She disclaimed all idea of encouraging him ; not over contemptuously, but in sober and distinct expressions : gave a very fair explanation of how the rides had come about ; made no objection to keeping him at a greater distance, since his demeanour had excited attention. All that was very well ; but it was her manner that puzzled and annoyed me—something nervous, tremulous, that is not usual with her—especially when I alluded to Mary’s having thought it right to have recourse to some management to prevent her driving home

with Ferrers the other evening ; I could almost say tears were in her eyes, only mine are not as good as they have been. Then, I will not be sure—for she was interrupted by your coming in—but I think she said something of the probability of her going away for a time ; only whatever it was, there was a kind of melancholy earnestness while she spoke which struck me as very singular ; and she had much the way with her of a woman who has more on her mind than she cares to own ; and then to crown all, I observed that though she had coloured deeply while I was speaking to her, when you two came into the room, she grew all at once as pale as death, while she trembled like an aspen leaf ; and (if you noticed)

could hardly even ask you connectedly after Charly. Now I don't know what all that means. I wish it may not betoken that, as she was almost too sensible, too discriminating in youth, she is going to show us all, now she is rising nine-and-twenty, that she can be a greater fool than any woman I ever ——. But what are you about, Arthur?" exclaimed he, suddenly interrupting himself; "you will drive us into the ditch if you don't take care!"

His nephew started, pulled up sharply, and did *not* drive his uncle's phaeton into a ditch; though as Mr. Darrell truly observed: "It was a very near thing."

Some remarks followed on the subject of

an awkwardness so unusual in Arthur ; then the horses received their merited honour ; and this was so far of use as to obviate the necessity of his taking any direct notice of his uncle's communications. But when they were again driving on safely and quietly, Mr. Darrell proceeded :

“ I hope to heaven I am mistaken ! Only you understand, Arthur, from all this, that resolved as I am never to sanction such a connection, it would be great inconsistency on my part were I to ask him to the house again, or pay him any civility, which, except for what we have been talking of, I should have had no objection to show him. I have entered on the subject chiefly that you might thoroughly comprehend me on that point.”

Arthur Darrell assured his uncle that the explanation was needless, but showed himself gratified by being treated with so much confidence, and they soon after reached Darrell Place. As they went into the house Mr. Darrell said :

“Take no notice to Mary of what I have been saying. I had you with me mainly to prevent her guessing what I went for.”

His nephew assented ; and then passing hurriedly through the house, sought out the most retired corner of the garden, there to give himself up without restraint to his reflections. An hour before, in the library at Cranfield, as thought followed thought in quick succession, the question had been whispered “whether it might not be, that in

spite of time and fate—in spite of his offences and her just resentment—something more than compassion might still move Alice Wentworth? Something so entwined with the remembrances and affections of youth as to form a part of her very being—even as of his?”

His uncle's words had seemed to answer him; his brain grew dizzy, and his breath came thick; one moment he called himself the happiest and most honoured of men, and then the most miserable being under the sun! for if he interpreted his uncle's observations aright, was it not plain he ought in future to shun her he loved, if he would not inflict on her even more sorrow than he had yet inflicted? He reproached himself bitterly

for having found pleasure in the thought of what must be misery to the idol of his soul.

He had hitherto, as was his wont, fostered the passion which possessed him, having always said to himself "that it was his own affair — *she* doubtless hated or despised him—if he preferred the fate of Tantalus while in her sight to absence—he injured no one by the choice he made." But with the intoxicating hope of being again beloved, a vision of his duty arose unbidden and unwelcome to torment him. Soon he told himself "*that* hope was too bewitching to be real—at any rate was not such as to call on him to renounce the only pleasure left him." Thus he argued with his charac-

teristic weakness, and inability to face the pain of a decision in any matter where his passions were engaged.

That day, that night, these thoughts pursued him ; but the next morning found him standing alone in the garden considering when and how he might next hope to enjoy the sight of Alice Wentworth. While so employed he heard Charly's voice at no great distance, bewailing some misfortune, and on calling him he was told by the child who looked up at him with a dismal countenance, over which tears were beginning to flow, "that he and Fred were not to be taken to Cranfield now. 'Aunt Alice' was gone—gone away to Brighton—he was not to have

dinner with her—and she was not coming again.”

“Who told you so, Charly?” asked his father.

“Aunt Mary!” answered he. “Aunt Mary says—I must learn to bear—dis—ap—pointments.”

“That you must,” said his father, “you and your elders too—but this,” he murmured to himself, “is a sore one. Not a last word—not a last look!” and he hastened to ascertain if Charly’s report were correct, which it substantially was; for a note from Alice had come a few minutes before to Mrs. Thornton informing her “that she had just heard from her friend Mrs. Fitzgerald, who had invited her to her house at Brighton,

nd that it was her intention to leave Cranfield within an hour, to be away for a fortnight at least—possibly for a longer period.” Adding “that she regretted the less being unable to go to Darrell Place once again as she had seen her uncle the day before; but must content herself with sending her love and kind remembrances to all its other inmates.”

Mrs. Thornton showed a good deal of surprize at this sudden plan and its hasty execution; “having had no idea,” she said, “that Alice the least contemplated going to the sea this year.” Mr. Darrell did not express so much astonishment. He thought “that Alice seldom let an autumn pass without going to Brighton;” and was of

opinion "that this was as good a time as she could choose."

"But," said he, "she had better have waited a little, and settled Wilkinson's business as she passed through London. She will have to come up from Brighton for it, you will see; and then there is William Stone's farm down here, and the building of that house to be decided about. I cannot think what makes women do things always in such a hurry."

"It is not like Alice's usual ways," observed Mrs. Thornton; "and I wish I had known of it sooner, for I meant to have taken all the children to have their early dinner at Cranfield to-day, and had told them so."

"I am very much grieved to hear she is gone," said Arthur Darrell, as his uncle left the room, "for I may not see her again; and I have never thanked her as I ought for her excessive kindness to Charly, all the first month we were here."

"Do not disturb yourself, Arthur," replied Mrs. Thornton, "I am sure she has no doubt of all you feel; but I will not fail to express it to her. She always is kind; but I really do not think she considered anything a trouble that she did for Charly: she is so very fond of him, and I do not wonder; he is such a dear affectionate little fellow."

Having said this, she went about her own occupations, leaving Arthur to endure as he

night, the bitter thought, that he had yesterday unconsciously taken leave of Alice; a thought rendered yet more painful by the reflection that, whether it were resentment, or a different feeling which led her to avoid him, as she plainly did, her determination was caused, or hastened, by his want of self-command, on the day of the Farnden excursion. In his better mind, he knew it was well she did so; but the idea, he might never behold her again, overwhelmed him to that degree that he had the utmost difficulty to maintain the appearance of ordinary interest in what was passing, and to show no more than the amount of emotion, for which he had assigned a reason to Mrs. Thornton, and for

feeling which so strongly, he rose in her opinion.

All went on as usual at Darrell Place the next day; but on the following one (Saturday), Arthur Darrell received a visit from Horace Ferrers, who came, he said, to take leave, as he was going to quit Netherbridge.

"I am off to Brighton," said he to Darrell when alone with him. "I heard last night that the Cranfield bird was flown, and where to; Harriet is at Brighton, so is Lister, so is Dalton; I know her friend, Mrs. Fitzgerald too; and either you will hear of my leaving England before a fortnight is out, or else—of something you think quite impossible."

"Then, Horace," replied Darrell, "I will say good-bye to you, till we meet at a German watering-place; for you will hardly be in England so long as I."

"That is as may be," answered Ferrers, "matters could not come to a crisis here; everything done by a person living in a well-known country-house is so canvassed, there are so many people watching; she has felt that, I am sure, and I never was better pleased than on hearing she was off. On Wednesday, when I met you there, she was evidently quite put out, not at all in spirits; and it is my belief, from several little things she said, that she then took the resolution of going away. Of course she could not speak plainly, with that little girl

—her name is Whitmore, I think—in our way the whole time; and she is too much afraid of all the good people here, not to mention the gossips more immediately about her, to ask me to dinner in a rational way. But I think I understand her; and I shall not be long in making sure at Brighton.”

Darrell said he was, at all events, right to make no delay.

“It is, altogether, lucky she is gone to Brighton,” continued Ferrers, “for I don’t think Alfred could harbour me much longer. I cannot tell what his plans are; but he is desperately hard-up just now; and I should not wonder if he were to vanish presently.”

“It would not be the first time,” said Darrell; “but, Horace, you may as well dine here to-day—my uncle desired me to ask you.” (Alice’s departure had had the effect of relaxing the strictness of Mr. Darrell’s determination to show no civility to Ferrers.)

“Thank you,” replied Horace, with a slight air of haughtiness; “I am very much obliged to you and to your uncle; but you may tell the old gentleman, with as many regrets as you can coin for me, that I am engaged—and, to say truth, much better engaged; for Alfred has two or three friends to dinner (he is keeping it up still, you see), and it will not be quite such slow work as it is here, with

you and the old gentleman and that good cousin of yours, who looks shocked or puzzled at more than half one says. So good-bye ; I start to-morrow ; I am glad to see you looking so well—considering,” added he, with a knowing smile ; and having shaken hands with his brother-in-law, against whom, in his sanguine hope of speedy success, he seemed to bear no malice for his conduct on the Farnden day, he mounted his horse, and said to himself as he went along the avenue : “ What a fool Darrell is ! To think that he never had the wit to use his opportunities with Alice Wentworth when she was shut up in that school-room ! At eighteen she had her head full of dukes,

I have no doubt, and he might whistle for her ; but at sixteen (and both her brothers were dead then) she would have been too happy to have run away with any good-looking fellow that asked her. I wonder what use he ever made of being 'Beautiful Darrell!' And then to see the fuss he makes over that stupid brat, merely because she has petted him a little!—it is too absurd! I cannot help having the notion" (Horace chuckled a good deal as the idea passed through his brain) "that she must have flirted a bit with my respectable brother-in-law to enliven the dulness here before I came, for all she did not think him worth marrying formerly, and that is what has put him

so beside himself! Then for him to preach to me as he does! If it were not a bad precedent, and doing as I would not be done by, I would tell Emily the whole story, and a nice life she would lead him!"

CHAPTER IV.

Chi offende perdona mai.

PROVERB.

NOTHING farther was known of Horace Ferrers by the inmates of Darrell Place for some time ; though Mrs. Thornton continued to make herself rather uneasy, and Mr. Darrell, though he did not choose to say so, was exceedingly provoked when

he learnt that "that vagabond," as he inwardly denominated Ferrers, had conveyed himself to Brighton. One or two letters passed between Alice and Mrs. Thornton; and about ten days after her departure, the latter informed her uncle that things had turned out as he had foretold, and that Alice would find herself obliged to leave Brighton, and spend some days in London. "Ay, and she ought to come down here too, unless she has taken to neglect things strangely. She went away in a hurry, which is always a pity, and in my opinion she would be a wiser woman if she came back for good."

Horace Ferrers' history in the mean-

time had been as follows. On reaching Brighton, he found there, as he had expected, several acquaintances, not to speak of his sister, Lady Wilmington, who still managed, in spite of everything, by dint of some tact, and a good deal of daring, so far to preserve her place in society, as to be received by many people who yet sedulously avoided any intimacy with her.

He called on Mrs. Fitzgerald and her guest, and saw both ; but he now began, in the absence of all those neighbours and relations whom he had hitherto looked on as obstacles to his views by hindering his "opportunities," to make the unwelcome discovery that he might enjoy those oppor-

tunities to the full extent of his wishes, without being able to profit by them any more than many another had done before him.

Yet he was far from giving up his pursuit; he was, if anything, more keenly bent on trying every means—on letting slip no chance of accomplishing his purpose. It was becoming daily more necessary that his doom should be decided; for if Miss Wentworth refused him, he was aware that the other side of the Channel was the safer of the two for him.

He had been supplied with the means for visiting his native country, and for making the appearance he did while there, partly by an unusual run of good-

luck during his six weeks' stay at Baden, partly by the liberality of a certain Russian countess, a former acquaintance of his, with whom he there renewed an old intimacy. The countess was no longer young, and it was generally supposed that like that lady recorded by Madame de Sévigné "il y avait déjà dix ans qu'elle donnait de l'argent à ses amans."

Horace was at all events the richer for his connection with her ; but, though well provided enough to spend three months in England in such style as he thought became him, he was neither able nor inclined to adjust various heavy claims of long standing, to escape the inconvenience of which he had

crossed the sea two years before. He hoped, by avoiding London, where he knew he incurred most danger, to remain unbeset by troublesome reminders till such time as he should be married, or at least engaged to the well-known heiress; and hitherto he had been most fortunate in escaping the notice of any whose interest or pleasure it would be to punish his adventurous defiance of so many who had had the honour of ministering to his requirements gratis.

But his affairs had not been so speedily settled as he had expected; his funds were beginning to run low; and he had found at Brighton opportunities for deep play in which he had not had his Baden luck;

the consequence was that a desperate resolution seized him to make his proposal the very next time he met Miss Wentworth, let her manner, and the circumstances under which he should come across her, be what they might.

He had heard of proud beauties being sometimes taken by storm in a way utterly unexpected by themselves and by the world ; and if any man ever succeeded in that style, surely he ought. At any rate, he had no time now for other methods. But great was his dismay just after he had come to this determination, on learning from Mrs. Fitzgerald, whom he met out walking, that her friend had gone to London that day, to remain an indefinite time ; at least, that

it was quite uncertain when she might return to Brighton.

This information placed Horace in a considerable dilemma; on the one hand, the decision of his fate could not brook delay; on the other, he knew the risk he ran if he showed himself in London; and he hesitated more than was his wont, as to the path he should choose. It so happened that he was engaged that day to dine at the house of a lady and gentleman, who had more wealth than good taste, and at whose parties very heterogeneous society was often assembled.

They were themselves highly respectable individuals; nevertheless, as they had met Horace Ferrers somewhere abroad,

and as he was a scapegrace of quality, they were well pleased to see him at their table, nor did it occur to them that he was otherwise than fit company for another of their guests—Mr. Herbert Clayton to wit—the wealthy and most respectable banker. The said Herbert, who had in the last six years, grown a little more consequential, and a little less openly sarcastic, would in some moods have made little scruple of giving his host and hostess plainly to perceive that they had made a great mistake in inviting a person of his character to sit down at the same table with such a notorious gambler and spendthrift as Ferrers; but luckily for the feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, he happened on

this occasion to be more indulgently disposed.

Idle reports, and some observations made by his mother, had rendered him aware that Ferrers was supposed to be desirous of ingratiating himself with Miss Wentworth; he had had a slight curiosity respecting him, and was therefore not ill-pleased to meet him at a house where, from the indisposition of his wife, he was dining as a bachelor. The two men sat near each other, and after dinner it was easy to lead Horace into conversation which flowed the more readily when he discovered that his companion was nearly related to Miss Wentworth, and had known his brother-in-law intimately in

early youth. Horace talked on as usual, unrestrained by any reserve; spoke of old Mr. Darrell of Darrell Place, of his own visits there, of Arthur Darrell's sojourn in England, of Miss Wentworth, &c., till Herbert Clayton elicited from him a fact of which he had been ignorant; namely, that Arthur Darrell and Alice had been inmates of Darrell Place together during several weeks.

At this intelligence Herbert could not suppress the words, "Indeed! a singular coincidence!" pronounced in a tone so sarcastic and full of meaning as to arrest the attention of Horace Ferrers, who paused in his rattling talk, while Mr. Clayton inquired in a voice which seemed purposely softened,

“whether Miss Wentworth had appeared to be in good spirits while at Darrell Place? It is a strange thing,” added he, “how chance brings together those who seem the most unlikely to meet, and who yet in former days—” he stopped short, and then went on as if pursuing a train of thought, “I have always felt a great interest in my cousin Alice; and I cannot but regret—” he paused again, and again continued, “Your brother-in-law is quite an altered man now, I hear. In the times I was thinking of, he was the wildest fellow I ever knew. It is wonderful, the advantages and opportunities he threw away.”

Horace Ferrers was eagerly desirous of a more detailed explanation of these oracular

sentences ; and he exerted all his ingenuity for the purpose ; but in vain. No powers could draw anything clearer from the discreet Mr. Clayton, who did not wish to commit himself any farther. He was ignorant of the peculiar circumstances which had attended Darrell's renewal of intimacy with Alice Wentworth six years back ; and therefore unable to attribute his own refusal by the heiress the following spring directly to that intimacy ; yet he retained towards both a feeling of spite, to which he this evening gave an unwonted and imprudent vent, urged on by the double pleasure of affecting to know secrets the revelation of which might be painful to a woman whom so many had courted in vain, and of teasing Ferrers by

first exciting and then baffling his curiosity. Herbert piqued himself on his powers of teasing, and they were seldom so successfully exerted.

Ferrers had been puzzled to account for the little progress he had lately made with Miss Wentworth; for that any woman should feel dislike or indifference towards him, was an idea too mortifying to be entertained, and in his mind could only be comprehended as implying preference for another. A very unpleasant light began therefore to dawn upon him. He had taken up the notion that Alice had formerly refused his brother-in-law; but Mr. Clayton's looks of compassion for her, and his contemptuous wonder at the "advantages and opportu-

nities" Darrell threw away, seemed to point to a very different tale; and the way in which farther questions were evaded, and then finally and decidedly put a stop to, only served to strengthen the impression which the whole made on his mind.

"Then perhaps it is Darrell who is in my way after all!" said he to himself, as he revolved these things at night. "I thought Alfred talked nonsense in jumping to the conclusions he drew, when I told him how I had had to turn out of Cranfield leaving that sly dog behind me! Yet I cannot believe he would ever have been such an ass as not to take her if she would have had him! It is too absurd—but he is far

gone enough about her *now* at all events! and if there is any truth in what this fellow hints, of course he is doubly savage at the idea of my being the better for what he would not snap at in the right moment! I shall take my chance all the same, though; for I *must*—and must go to London, too, at my peril. But, if I had been up to this part of the story, I would have seen him hanged before I would have let him lead me out of the house so quietly the other night; and what is more, if I am refused, I shall know whom I have to thank. For he may say what he will, she was devilish well pleased with me at Baden, and was glad to see me at the old uncle's till the day

when such a dust was kicked up about her hair. A fine handle that rascal made of it, I doubt not !”

The issue of these and similar cogitations was that Horace Ferrers did go to London next day. His situation made him heedless of consequences ; and he was likewise stimulated by the feeling of rivalry with his brother-in-law ; which, combined with the charms of Miss Wentworth’s person, (charms by no means lost on him,) had worked him up into a state of eagerness for the result, beyond anything he had ever experienced before, save at the gaming-table.

CHAPTER V.

The gods are just : and of our pleasant vices

Make instruments to scourge us.

MR. DARRELL proved to have been right. Alice Wentworth found, when in London, that she must return to Cranfield for a day or two, if she wished to be free to remain at Brighton as long as she judged fit. She accordingly did so ; and returned to her home about a fortnight after leaving it, without

having given notice of her intention to any one at Darrell Place, which she was firmly resolved not to revisit as long as its present inmates remained there. Knowing, however, that the fact of her spending two nights and a day at Cranfield could not be concealed from her relations, and fearing lest either her uncle or even her gentle cousin Mary might think it unkind if she appeared to wish to hide herself from them, she wrote a note in the course of the morning to the latter, which she trusted would prevent any such feeling, as she pleaded the excuse of the business which was occupying her, and stated that she meant to be gone again by an early hour on the morrow.

This note being dispatched, and also such parts of the business which had brought her down as could be transacted before the evening, she strolled out from the library into the garden, enjoying the privilege which the freedom of the country alone affords, of breathing the outward air at any moment.

Surprized to find it so mild, she wandered on and on, and then turned her steps towards her flower-garden.

The flower-garden at Cranfield was near the house, though not in sight of it; it was a sheltered and sunny spot, encircled, but not overshadowed by trees whose boughs were still leafy, late as it was in October. The autumn frosts had been hitherto so un-

usually slight that many and brilliant beds of verbenas, geraniums, and fuschias still adorned this favoured retreat, which, from its situation, and the care bestowed on it, retained the aspect of summer long after the influence of the advancing year was sensibly felt in the rest of the pleasure-grounds.

A bench had been fixed under the ivy-covered wall in a nook looking due south, well fenced by an evergreen on each side, and affording a pleasant resting-place even in mid-winter, so shielded was it from all the keener winds ; and to this, her favourite seat in autumn and early spring, did Alice Wentworth now repair.

It was near noon : the day was still and

pleasant, though not constantly unclouded ; and as she sat in the quiet garden, a sensation of repose came over her, to which she had been for some time a stranger. But, though lulled both in soul and body for a few minutes, it seemed after a while as if her troubled thoughts took only the more entire possession of her, owing to the very loneliness of the place to which she had fled from them ; and much had occurred in the last few days to disturb the serenity of her mind.

Horace Ferrers, on finding himself in London, had not failed to hasten to Miss Wentworth's house, and to declare himself her devoted lover, whose whole hope of happiness depended on her doing justice to the

feelings which impelled him to seek an union with her. He was refused ; but with so much gentleness and courtesy, that, goaded as he was by his desperate situation, and his eagerness to prove his brother-in-law a false prophet, he conceived hope that the decision was not irrevocable, and ventured to re-urge his suit ; upon which Miss Wentworth thought it necessary to make him aware that her words had simply expressed her true and real meaning.

Thoroughly disappointed, provoked by the quiet indifference of her manner, and reckless from sense of the utter ruin which threatened him, he became regardless alike of good breeding and of prudence ; he

reminded Alice of her admission of his attentions while abroad, and reproached her for the change, which he imputed, without much circumlocution, to Arthur Darrell's influence; adding, with injurious emphasis, "that had he known at first what was plain enough now, it would have been long before he had so wasted his time."

He could no longer complain of the slight effect his words produced; for, on his uttering this speech, Alice appeared for a moment dumb-struck, till, rising in anger, but without noticing his insults to herself, she denied any attempt on Darrell's part to sway her conduct, with an indignant zeal, an enthusiastic earnest-

ness, which could not indeed but betray a strong interest in him whose defence she so eagerly undertook, but whence Ferrers drew conclusions fit for his own base and corrupted nature, and which furnished him with food for fresh insolence ere he left her presence.

As this scene was reacted in her imagination, her blood boiled anew ; and she endeavoured to rid herself of the hateful recollection. Her mind turned to him whose powerlessness to conceal his emotions, had exposed her not only to the painful revival of much she had thought extinguished in her own breast, but also to Ferrers' mean revenge ; to him, whose constancy of feeling after his inconstancy of action formed a per-

petual problem, which she found now (as heretofore) unsolvable. Unless, indeed, it were, that the love, which seemed newly sprung to life, had, in truth, never died, had been ever coexistent with the heart in which it dwelt; if so—but no, it could not be—he was only a weak and changeful man, always desirous of that which was denied him, careless of that which was in his power.

Yet her thoughts hovered over the Farnden expedition, over its conclusion in her house; they flew back to her days of youth, they returned to the present time; and they finally shaped themselves into the ever-recurring question: "Has Arthur Darrell always loved

me? and if he has, what has severed us?"

She sat buried in these reflections; nor was she even recalled to consciousness of external things by the sound of approaching footsteps till they drew close to her; when, as she raised her head, the subject of her meditations stood before her. His face was deadly pale, and a wild and haggard expression had taken place of the settled gloom which usually overspread it.

"You are here! that is well at least," exclaimed he, as he shook hands with her.

"Yes, I am here," she replied, "but I did not think you could have heard

so soon of my sudden run down from London. Are they all well?—my uncle? — Mary? — has nothing happened?” added she, hastily, for his look struck her more and more as he seated himself beside her.

“No,” replied he, “they are well—all well, I believe,” and he leaned back on his seat in silence which he seemed little inclined to break, till Miss Wentworth, willing to end the embarrassing stillness, inquired “if he had found his way there from the house?”

“No,” answered he, “I came across the fields. I looked in this direction as I was going towards the house, and I saw you.”

Having said this, he sunk again into silence, from which he was again roused by Miss Wentworth, who said :

“I am sure something is the matter, though you will not tell me. Something *has* happened to one of them, and you are come to let me know—what is it?”

“Nothing of the kind, nothing,” answered Darrell. “But,” continued he, after a considerable pause, “I am come—because I may not see you again—most likely shall not. This day is possibly—most probably—my last in England.”

“Indeed!” interrupted Miss Wentworth, with surprise.

“My last,” repeated he with despairing

emphasis ; “and if you think I could leave the country—leave *you* without seeing you once more—without bidding farewell at all risks—you little know me, or the love I have always borne you !”

Alice rose as these words were spoken, and turning indignantly from Darrell, she exclaimed :

“What have I done to expose me to so much pain and insult ? I thought you incapable of misinterpreting kindness—of failing in respect to those who do not wilfully forfeit their claim to it—it is bitter sorrow to be compelled to think otherwise.”

She was turning to go, when he exclaimed :

“This and more than this would have been spared, had I hastened back to the continent then when you dissuaded me! It was in kindness and generosity—still you yourself were the dissuader! Alice! I entreat—I implore you by the days of our childhood—by the remembrance of your brothers, do not drive me away in anger for a word that escaped my lips through madness of sorrow—when I must quit you sight for ever before this hour passes!”

“You have conjured me by a strong spell,” said Alice, standing still, but with averted eyes. “I would willingly part in peace; yet it is forgiving a great deal, if I pardon (even in a farewell)

an assertion which is as false as it is daring."

"Yes," cried he, "it is natural you should feel indignation—contempt; but the assertion is true. Till this moment the dread of your anger sealed my lips; but now, that in my despair I have braved that anger—now that through a doom independent of your will and mine, we are to be so soon parted for ever, I claim from your mercy—from your justice even—the bare time—the bare attention requisite for enabling me to show I was no traitor, no intentional deceiver, then, when I most seemed so—when I was deservedly punished for my other sins in being so accounted by you!"

These words were poured forth with breathless rapidity, and Alice, more overpowered than convinced by his vehemence, answered faintly :

“Speak then, if you will: you shall not say I denied my brothers’ friend a hearing.”

“You were always generous,” cried he, “but if you, indeed, consent to listen, sit down there while I give utterance to my story.”

She complied; he placed himself again beside her, but at a rather greater distance than before. He sat silent for some moments as if collecting his thoughts; at length, raising his eyes towards Alice, he began as follows :

“It is a strange tale to relate to the purest of women! One I could not of old have related. to her even of another. That I should live to tell it of myself! But the greater shame drives out the lesser, and I must needs harden myself to the task. Yet how shall I begin? for every word brings misery and offence with it—but you are as noble as you are pure; and having consented to listen, will not turn away in anger, because I first say (what I think you must ever have believed) that you were, from my early youth, the centre of my thoughts and hopes, the guiding star to which I looked for happiness; would that I could always have kept it in my sight! But satisfied with knowing my inward preference for what was best as

well as loveliest, I made light of that strict view which commands the practice of self-denial in all things ; and I thought, as men are apt to do, that, within certain bounds, I might here and there enjoy forbidden pleasures, till such time as I might lawfully enjoy a greater ; though, to look no farther, it is impossible for any save some very hard-headed and hard-hearted men, when once embarked on such a sea, to set those bounds to their course which they had originally prescribed to themselves. So it was with me.

“ In your presence I knew but one love, one wish, one hope ; nor were you fully absent from my mind. But having, elsewhere, given the reins to my senses, I

became so far the plaything of my own passing caprices and those of others, that I was led there, whither I never meant to steer, and lost—it is now near ten years since—the haven where I should have found peace and rest. It is vain to dwell on the sorrow of that time; as you hear me now, I cannot complain that you refused me that mercy then; I deserved it not, yet it might have been well for both had you listened to me. Long, long after, it seemed to me that I was incapable of pleasure, inaccessible to temptation. But that is a state which can hardly endure at the age I then was, and old habits resumed their empire.

“If I for a moment reflected, I was apt

to comfort myself by an advantageous comparison with the worse part of my associates ; and I was satisfied because I had never laid deliberate snares, nor abused a friend's confidence. I did not purpose to lead such a life for ever ; but I had seen no woman who replaced you in my mind, and I was perpetually hearing that you had made another choice.

“ It will be seven years early next spring since I went to stay at Lady Wilmington's country-house, which was filled with as thoughtless a set of men and women as I ever remember ; and I there met my hostess's sister. The family to which she belonged, the society in which she willingly took her part, inclined me to believe with the

world in general that though hitherto restrained by circumstances, she was fully disposed to tread in the same paths as those among whom she passed her whole time ; nor did her demeanour belie the impression.

“ I was myself received in a manner flattering to my vanity ; though I might have known even then that any other man possessed of passable claims to the approval of the frivolous beings by whom she was surrounded, would have been equally pleasing to her.

“ Still I was flattered, little as there was to gratify me in the encouragement given by one whom I myself believed to be a mere compound of vanity and levity ; but

I caught momentary fire, and I was too much imbued with the maxim that 'one is a fool for refusing a fair challenge' to consider the cost I might pay for a low and passing pleasure, as I thought it and meant it to be. Her husband was absent, and I speedily obtained a conquest, if it might deserve the name, which I have had cause to rue more and more up to this day."

Alice remained silent and motionless as a statue, during the short pause which followed these words; and after a delay of some moments Darrell proceeded:

"In taking advantage of her folly and unprincipled lightness, I sinned against God and against her husband; but against you, Alice, I sinned not! for had I deemed it

possible to buy back the smallest chance of being ever restored to your favour, the opportunity of a hundred such gallantries would have been flung from me with indifference, with disgust; though it avails little, you will say, whether I would, or would not have forborne for love of you, seeing that I could not forbear from a higher motive.

“Be that as it may, the visit which sealed my fate soon came to an end; but my intrigue was carried on when Lady Emily and I met shortly after in London; with little ardour, I must say—but still it was carried on. The character Lady Wilmington bears is such that I do it no injury in saying that she favoured our

meetings in her house ; which, in a certain sense, prevented their becoming the matter of public scandal they might have done.

“ But weariness on my side, and pettishness on hers, threatened every day to break the tie formed by mere vicious idleness. It was then I saw you again ! When shall I cease being haunted by remembrance of that sight ? My connection with Lady Emily, insipid already, grew hateful to me from that moment ; and when Bramstone’s friendship opened me a door to new happiness, I eagerly desired its dissolution.

“ A worse or a better man than I, might soon have extricated himself ; but I lacked

the cool cunning of the one and the straightforward courage of the other ; so that I went on, weakly trusting that the thing would die away of itself.

“Thus it was with no false show, but with the reality of true and ardent love, that I sought anew what I had once forfeited. As that short month fled by, and my hope grew higher, I thought less and less of the secret entanglement that was the only drawback to my daily pleasure ; for my involuntary coldness, and the failure of my mistress’s attempts to excite my jealousy, had so nettled her, that I believed myself virtually free ; and I literally forgot the fetters which had bound me, when I met you on the 28th of May ; for well is the date engraved on

my memory ! I asked for pardon ; you granted it ; we were interrupted—but I left that ball-room in the belief that I was, in deed, though not yet in word, plighted to you for life ; and in that persuasion I went home.

“On reaching it about two in the morning I was told that a lady was waiting in my room. It was no other than Lady Emily, who rushed into my arms with frantic eagerness, calling on me to protect and console her amid the ruin to which she had been brought by her love of me ! My first idea was that she had literally lost her senses ; but I soon found that she was no farther deprived of them than a weak and spiritless

nature always is by sudden fear or perplexity.

“It would be vain to attempt repeating her incoherent speeches; but this is the purport of what I at last comprehended from them. Her husband (with whom I was but slightly acquainted), and one or two members of his family had lately noticed with displeasure the extreme levity of her general conduct; though neither he nor they connected their suspicions more with me than with some other visitors at Lady Wilmington’s house. But all intercourse with her sister was forbidden. She complained of tyranny, exhaled her discontent in a secret correspondence, and unhappily one of Lady Wilmington’s answers (in which she advised

Lady Emily to take patience, and yield to the storm for the present) was so worded as to leave no doubt of the lengths she had already gone.

“Lady Emily was surprised by her husband while reading this letter. She attempted to hide it; it fell, and her extreme terror, and hurry to repossess herself of it, so excited his already awakened suspicions, that he snatched and read it. He reproached her instantly with her guilt, which she lacked her sister’s audacity to deny firmly at once; though, on recollecting that the name of her accomplice could not be gathered from the letter, she attempted afterwards to assert her innocence, but in vain; for her husband left her, saying, ‘that he was now

sure of her infidelity, and should take means to prove and punish it.' Some precautions were taken to prevent her leaving the house, or having communication with any one from without ; but she eluded them, and fled at midnight to me.

"She now threw herself on my mercy, my honour, my love, for which she had sacrificed everything. She was indeed irretrievably lost, for I knew too well that her husband, once convinced of his dishonour, would shortly find the proofs he required. How could I then refuse protection to a woman of whose disgrace I was the instrument ?

"Yet," continued Darrell, "(I know not whether I gain or lose in your eyes by the

confession), I hesitated, and sorely ; for, to give up the bliss within my grasp, the tie that promised me long years of happiness, for one who now inspired me with no tenderer feeling than that of a somewhat contemptuous pity, for one whose own coquetry had originally excited me to the game in which she so easily became a partner, to give up all this, was a sacrifice to honour and to compassion before which I recoiled ; but with the victim of my sin and folly at my feet, what could I do ? True, I had made her no promises—true, she was so light by nature, and so ill-disciplined by education, that I might fairly calculate that, had I not been at hand to shake the fruit from the tree, another would have done so instead ;

but these considerations did not alter the fact that she had through me lost her reputation, her position, her home. If I had feeling or sense of honour, I was bound to replace the last ; since to restore the rest was beyond my power.

“ She perceived the struggle in my mind, though she was far from guessing its extent or cause ; and exclaimed in desperation that as I had ceased to love her, and she had neither parents living nor friend with whom she could take refuge, she should seek that which was alone open to a deceived and deserted woman. I stopped her as she was rushing to the door, for I was well aware she spoke truth in saying she had no friend who could avail her, and her

confess all such that their pro-
 give more ruinous than their enmity.
 t! her that she was not deserted,
 made her all the promises I have
 kept "

He paused, and drooped his head, as if the effort of relating his history had bereft him alike of bodily and mental strength, while Alice said, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, but audible and distinct :

"You would have heaped sin on sin had you done otherwise."

On hearing these words, Darrell started and exclaimed :

"It is something to have that from your lips—something to know that the life-long sacrifice was in your sight needful ; for

there have been times when sophisticating doubts have even robbed me of such consolation as I could gain from the thought of its necessity; though till this hour I have never sought to palliate my conduct at the expense of the woman whom I have made my wife, save that, once only, when I thought myself dying, I poured out my whole soul to my mother. She gave me sympathy rather according to the measure of her love than of my deserving; for bitter was the disappointment and humiliation I had wrought her! But she told me (you and my mother, Alice, have now said the same thing) that having erred as I had done, I should have erred more shamefully in leaving my fellow-sinner to suffer alone;

and she confirmed me in my intention of marrying Lady Emily as soon as it was possible ; cruelly as she felt both for herself and for me, the compulsory choice into which my vices had led me, and deeply as she grieved at the thought of how nearly I had regained the hand of which I had once before deprived myself—the hand of her whom she would have chosen for me out of the whole world.

“ I have told you how all this befel ; but I could not, were I to speak till the day of doom, tell you what I endured. Twice I was on the point of ridding myself of the burden of my life.

“ At the moment of flight — flight from what I loved, with what I des-

pised—I stifled reflection in the hurry of departure; but when at noon on the following day, just after we had landed in France, I heard the hour strike when I should have been setting off to claim you as my own, desperation seized me. In a moment more my sorrows in this world would have ended; but my companion, terrified at one instant of loneliness, followed me; and her presence hindered the rash act from which the sense of the entire desolation in which I should have left her, would yet not have withheld me.

“Afterwards, when the time came for the fulfilment of my promise, and the sealing of my utter and life-long renouncement of

you, I experienced a shuddering abhorrence of the obligation I had laid on myself; and that overwhelming desire of being delivered from my wretchedness at whatever cost, came over me anew. I thought for a moment that I might be pardoned if, after having legally endowed the mother of my unborn child with my name and worldly goods, I put a period to my hated existence. But *my* mother, who by some inscrutable means appeared to guess what was passing within me, reproved my weakness, commanding me to live for the duties I had to perform, and to make the best of the unhonoured union I had agreed to enter into.

“I sometimes think,” he continued, after

a momentary pause, "that the far deeper feeling I have for Charly than for my other children, springs in part from recollection of the struggle I underwent, in forcing myself to the timely accomplishment of the sacrifice, which secured to him those rights of which he must else have been deprived. For one would willingly persuade one's self that a being for whom one has even in fancy renounced the last ray of one's dearest hope, is worth his price.

"I have endeavoured to obey my mother's last commands. I have never voluntarily let my wife suspect the repugnance with which I made her such; and I have tried in all things to act up to my promise of sparing

no pains to make reparation for what she on her part considered herself to have sacrificed. But it is hateful to spend one's life in vainly trying to elevate what is inherently base; it is grievous to stand forever on one's guard lest one's children should be perverted by the example constantly set before them.

"I am pitied, I believe, for having chosen to share my wife's banishment from the society of her equals; but if that were all the evil I suffered, I should count myself a happy man. I suppose I ought to be thankful for not being repaid in kind for the dishonour I laid on her first husband. But, without any such misfortune, his is a miserable lot, who, having known the better,

has taken the worse ; and who finds within his household neither congenial feeling, nor elevated principles, nor steadiness of mind, nor that amount of warm and tender affection which bestows contentment and patience under far less favourable worldly circumstances than ours.

“And now I have told you all—let me hear, Alice—not that you forgive me—for you had no loss in such a one as I—but that you no longer believe me to be that foulest of things, a wilful deceiver !”

“I do forgive—I do believe—if the word will not offend, I pity you from my very soul,” replied Alice. “But now I have done you this full justice, I beseech

you, for my sake as well as your own, to repair in a more tranquillized spirit, to your home."

"I have none!" interrupted Darrell.

"No! but you were surely returning to it—where are you now going?"

"That is more than I can tell; wherever a banished man *can* go," replied he, with a bitter laugh.

"Good God!" cried Alice in terror, "I was not mistaken! something dreadful *has* happened, and I *must* know it! tell me what it is!"

Darrell's face quivered convulsively as she fixed her eyes on him; but by a strong effort he composed it in a degree, and said:

“I had thought to spare you and myself the horror, but,” (and he sunk his voice to the lowest audible pitch,) “an hour ago I was in the little wood expecting Charly, who was coming to see me fire my pistols at that target the Thornton boys have set up there. I heard footsteps, but instead of the child it proved to be Horace Ferrers, come straight from London to say his creditors had found him out, and he must have money to save him from prison. I had none to give him. He wanted me to get it out of my uncle. I refused—he grew angry—he spoke of you—(it was from him I learnt you were here.) Then he said he had a claim upon me—that I had done him ill offices. I bid him be silent; he persisted;

he said even more—uttered worse slander. But when in his rage he boasted of having cast like insults on you, I lost patience, and I struck him; he seized one of the pistols which lay beside us, saying ‘he would have satisfaction then and there, not wait for meddling friends to hinder us.’ I was but too ready to follow his example, we both fired—and he fell.”

Alice uttered a faint scream at these words, and half rose from her seat, but sank back on it with a look of dread and abhorrence.

“You see,” continued Darrell, “that I *have* no home; for how can I knock at his sister’s door with his blood on my hand?”

“Make haste ! go ! escape for your life, Arthur !” cried Alice, vehemently ; for her horror of bloodshed was now swallowed up in fear for his safety.

“I care not for the life that is to be passed far from you,” answered he, with a sort of reckless calm, “but, I am safe for a time. I could see that the labourers whom I told where he lay and whither to carry him, (he was still breathing when I left the wood,) fancied the catastrophe was accidental, and it will not be immediately known that it was otherwise.”

“He breathes !” exclaimed Alice, “then he may recover ! and then—”

“I may not be for life a blood-stained exile,” interrupted Darrell. “But I may

be so, and therefore I came to see you for the last time."

"God forgive you! God guide and strengthen you in so much misery!" cried Alice, weeping aloud. "But we know not what may be passing; there are worse things than exile. You may be tracked. Oh, save yourself, dear Arthur!"

"I will—I have not come here for nothing! You have believed, and forgiven, and pitied me; and I obey you—I depart. But grant me, oh, dearest Alice! a few moments more. All this time has been spent in a troubled tale, in a horrible announcement. Walk with me as far as your gate, this last, last time!"

He led her unresistingly out of the flower-

garden, and they walked on without speaking under tall trees, whose boughs, yielding a thick shade in summer, were now but thinly clothed with reddening leaves. When they reached the end of this walk, Darrell said :

“This is peace; but for how long?” and turned back again with his companion, whose tears flowed silently. After having proceeded a few steps he again broke silence, and said, pressing her hand within both his, “Alice, do you see how the dead leaves fall round us? Do you hear how the wind whistles in the bare branches? It was just such a day, in just such a walk as this, at Farnden, not quite ten years ago, when you promised to be mine, and

mine only ; when you plighted your faith to me."

"Why remind me of that?" said Alice, faintly struggling to free her hand.

"Because, though I twice lost you by my own fault—though I kept not the vow I made—yet I feel, I know in my soul, that it was the only truly binding one that ever passed my lips. What have either you, or I, found in the whole world worth the love we bore each other? Why should I be held bound by the legal, but unblessed tie, with which, urged by mere worldly honour, and weak pity, I chained myself to an adulteress? to whom, if I would, I cannot now return? You, Alice, are free, unfettered, never will you find the man who

loves you as I love you—come with me, my dearest, my truest, my unstained bride—and let us fulfil our vows of youth in a far distant land, where we shall be all in all to each other !”

As he spoke he clasped her in his arms ; she closed her eyes, and seemed to have momentarily lost the power of speech and motion ; but as he concluded, she looked in his face without attempting to loose herself from his grasp, and stammered out the words :

“ Arthur, if ever you loved me — if ever you loved my brothers—let go your hold ! leave me at least to sinless sorrow !”

Her beseeching look penetrated him even

more than her words ; he relaxed the close embrace in which she trembled ; and no sooner had he done so, than she broke from his arms, and flew like an arrow into the house, whither he ventured not to follow her, though he advanced from under the covert of the trees, restlessly treading the turf before the entrance. He could not bear to quit the spot without pardon—but he dared not go to seek that pardon. His whole life flitted before him in the space of a few seconds (as it is said to do before the mental vision of a drowning man)—he lived it again from his earliest years up to that very moment—his thoughts recurred to the scene of strife and blood in which he had that morning been an actor.

Had he, or had he not to answer for a life, which, however worthless, was yet a life? whose sudden and violent ending was only the more frightful from its owner's reckless levity! Each detail of the quarrel rose rapidly to his mind. What was it that had so transported him beyond all bounds of reason as to make him deal the blow which had led to such fatal results? Not Ferrers' demands for money, nor his impudent request that Darrell should deceive his uncle to obtain it for him; not his abuse for what he termed the hindrance of his plans; nor yet the coarse phrase in which he taxed him with his motives. It was his foul interpretation of Alice Wentworth's looks and words; his shame-

less avowal of having dared give vent to his hateful suspicions to her very face. This it was, which had waked such fury in him ; these were the words which had hurried him into a deed of violence.

Horace Ferrers had paid a heavy penalty for his aspersions on Alice ; while he — the vindicator of her innocence — had now done his best to destroy the virtue which the other had only calumniated. For what punishment was he now reserved ? for what doom here and hereafter ?

He knew not how long he remained pacing the lawn in agonies of doubt and uncertainty ; when suddenly on lifting his eyes from the ground, he saw Alice again

before him, with cheeks and lips so utterly colourless that she might have passed for the ghost of herself. He covered his face with his hands ; but withdrew them as she began to speak.

“ Arthur,” said she, in a firm tone, “ it is needful that you depart. I say it not in anger ; for I am willing to believe the events of this day have deprived you of all power over yourself ; else you would never have said the words of which I see you now repent so bitterly. There is a horse saddled for you in the court-yard ; if you heed my words and my wishes, you will ride as hard as you can to the station, where you will leave him ; I will walk with you so far,” and she led the

way, Darrell following rather than accompanying her.

"I will obey you," said he, "and I thank you for your goodness ; but I fear even so much as to ask for pardon."

"It is given," said she, "on one condition."

"Name it !" he exclaimed.

"The condition is," replied Alice, as she walked on with averted face, "that you give your word—your most solemn promise, never—be your fate what it may—to seek to see me again. I am compelled for both our sakes to exact it," and her voice trembled, and a passing flush coloured her cheek as she uttered these words.

Darrell stood still, gazing on Alice with sorrowful earnestness.

"I would do much," said he, "to be forgiven this, my heaviest offence of all ; for unintended, undeliberate as it was, I yet hold it such. But this is a hard condition—one to which I know not if I can pledge myself."

"Then neither can I forgive," replied she, turning from him.

"Alice, I accept—I have accepted it."

"And you promise?"

"As I hope for forgiveness from Heaven, as well as from you, I will never seek to see your face again. Are you satisfied, Alice?"

"Keep that vow better than that you

made me in our days of youth, and I will not only forgive you from my soul, but I promise you—(and I have never broken the faith I plighted !) that, since I may not be yours, I will at least never be another's."

"Alice, I have done you evil—would have done you greater ; make no sacrifice for one who cannot repay it."

"My purpose implies no sacrifice," was her answer.

They had now reached the court-yard ; the horse stood ready, and Darrell mounted ; but Alice walked on beside him towards the north gate.

"I must depart," ejaculated he ; "it is needful—it is your pleasure. But whither

I am to wander when I have crossed the sea' and put my worthless life in safety, I verily know not."

"Obey me a little farther," said Alice. "Go straight to the Bramstones at Boulogne; this letter of Sophy's," she gave it him as she spoke, "tells you their address, and I will see that you and they shall have tidings of the life or death of that wretched man. I trust they may prove better than you think for! Will you comply with this my last wish?"

"I will," replied he, "and I feel your kindness, though I know what the tidings will be."

"You do not—you cannot," said Alice.

“ But here is the gate, and hence you must go.”

“ Then the last minute is come ! But,” added he, as he bent his head down to her, “ it is vow for vow ! and I know no other will ever have even this much from you !”

He kissed her lips, then galloped off at speed, and disappeared in a moment.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Alice had lost sight of Arthur Darrell, she turned back towards the house instinctively, but with little sense of whither she was going. A bewildering mixture of grief and terror overwhelmed her, exhausted as she was by the violent effort she had made to sustain her outward calm. There was a feeling within her as though she had

write," the man added, "she had been so shocked by Mr. Ferrers' accident."

From these words, as well as from other expressions he used, Alice gathered that Ferrers was certainly alive, and had been carried to Darrell Place; and moreover that no suspicions had as yet arisen as to the manner in which he had received his wound. She determined to comply at once with her cousin's request, and her orders were given immediately. The carriage was ready almost as soon as she was, and before many minutes had elapsed she found herself on the road to her uncle's house, without having yet breathed from the tumultuous emotions which shook her soul, and paralyzed by a stunning dread of what might yet follow.

She felt stifled by the choking oppression which seized her, her head seemed tightened, her heart beat violently, and she thought for a moment that the end of all earthly sorrows was coming sooner than she thought or hoped for. But it was not so. A flood of tears burst forth, which, as it were, broke the chain that bound her; she wept unrestrainedly, and was then better able, even in the midst of sobs and lamentations, to consider how she could best bear herself as regarded Arthur's safety, at Darrell Place, which she was now fast approaching. She resolved to volunteer no information; nor was she on her arrival shaken in her purpose; for her uncle, who looked greatly disconcerted, as well as shocked, spoke very little

to her that day ; and Mary Thornton, in the midst of the terror and agitation which still affected her, told her a tale “ of Mr. Ferrers’ arrival that morning—of his following Arthur to the wood where the targets were—of his ‘ providential ’ refusal to let Charly go with him — of the pistol-shot she had heard without any alarm,” which, disjointed as it was, showed such thorough absence of all suspicion, such conviction that the whole had occurred accidentally, that silence appeared to Alice the best and safest course.

Mrs. Thornton much lamented Arthur’s absence, “ as it would have been more natural for him to communicate with any of the Ferrers’ family who were in England ;” and

concluded by expressing her belief "that he had gone to London to secure the advice of a certain Mr. Worsley, whose talents and skill had been the subject of conversation only the evening before."

She then explained to Alice her reason for begging her to come over. "Her own children were already gone to Mrs. Fielding, who had kindly volunteered to receive them, that the quiet of the house might be as unbroken as possible; "but she did not know," she said, "how to dispose of Charly, and yet, in the state his uncle was in, it seemed desirable to remove the child. Would she, for the present moment at least, take charge of him?"

She consented with strangely mingled

feelings, the outward tokens of which did not escape Mrs. Thornton; who, however, laid them to a far different cause from that which truly prompted them. Alice then employed the few minutes required by preparations for the little boy's change of abode, in writing a line to her cousin Sophy, which conveyed to Boulogne the intelligence she had obtained at Darrell Place; namely, that Ferrers' wound, though severe and dangerous, was not supposed by Mr. Hayward, who had examined it, to be necessarily mortal.

Having thus fulfilled her engagement to send "tidings of life or death," she bid a hasty farewell to her cousin Mary, and got into the carriage with Charly, who seemed

too much scared and mazed by the sort of mysterious bustle going on around him, to make any demonstrations of pleasure on going to stay with "dear Aunt Alice."

He stood looking out of the carriage window without saying a word ; Miss Wentworth's arm was round him ; but she did not trust herself to bestow on him any farther notice or caresses, till, on his turning to her and inquiring "whether papa would come back that night?" tears streamed over her cheeks, and clasping him to her bosom, she kissed him again and again with more passionate tenderness than she had ever yet lavished on him, while she explained "that his papa would not return for

some days — might be a long time away, but that she would take care of him at Cranfield.”

Charly gazed at her with an expression which partook of fear as well as surprise, while he exclaimed in wonder :

“Aunt Alice ! you are crying !”

It was useless to deny it ; and she replied mildly :

“Yes, Charly ; grown-up people cry sometimes, as well as little children, only not for the same things—but I have done now.”

“Grown-up people do not cry because they are naughty,” said Charly.

“Not often,” answered Alice. “They cry sometimes because they are sorry.”

and the caresses which more than once threatened to call them forth irresistibly. But when his bed-time came, and he had departed, saying, "that he should take care of her, till his papa came to fetch him," with the necessity, she lost the power of self-command, and lifting her clasped hands she ejaculated, almost audibly, "Oh, that I could know—Oh, that it could be revealed to me, at the price of what pain or terror soever, that his father is safe; has crossed the sea; is on it even!"

The day, which had been unusually mild, was followed by a tempestuous night; and the blasts drove the rain loudly upon the window-panes. Alice shivered as she sat by the warm and blazing hearth; while

every image of desolation and horror crowded before her, as encircling the fugitive, whose flight and sorrows she might not share.

It would be vain to describe the succession of thoughts, which at once tortured and prolonged her waking hours that night, or the dreams which terrified her during the short intervals of sleep which could hardly be said to afford her rest.

She rose early; and considered long and deeply whether it would or would not now be wisest to enlighten her uncle as to the main fact of what had really happened.

Charly's prattle interrupted, if it did not stop, these reflections during breakfast;

but they had not yet brought her to any decision, when to her great surprize her uncle was announced.

He entered the room with a countenance even more serious than he had worn the day before, and begged her to send Charly away. She obeyed with a sinking heart; for she feared that his request was only a preliminary to the communication of the worst tidings, and seizing Mr. Darrell's hand, she exclaimed, the moment the child was gone :

“ Tell me quickly, uncle, is Horace Ferrers dead ?”

“ No ! Alice, no !” said Mr. Darrell, disengaging his hand from her's ; but still looking at her with a gravity almost amount-

ing to sternness. "You need not alarm yourself so excessively; he is not even worse, as far as I am able to understand; though I cannot deny that Hayward thinks very seriously of him, and that he has a great deal of fever. It is not hopeless; and that is all can be said. I fear," added he, as he seated himself.

"Yet that is something; more than might have been!" cried his niece, clasping her hands.

"It is so," said Mr. Darrell, "yet though I am glad to see you relieved from your overpowering anxiety, I should have not come over to-day, merely to give this account. But there are things connected with the matter which I am

bound to investigate—to investigate myself.”

He paused for a few moments, during which his niece sat in speechless dread; and then, fixing his eyes on her, he asked abruptly, “when she last saw Arthur?”

This home question, suddenly put, so terrified and bewildered her that she literally lost her breath, and wrung her hands in agony while panting to recover it.

“What makes me ask,” said her uncle, gazing at her with increased amazement, “is, that it was known yesterday to my servants, through yours, that he was here about the middle of the day; and that he rode your black horse, Selim, to the Wingate

station, in time to be off by two o'clock to London; whither they supposed he had gone to seek additional assistance for Ferrers; but we have had no tidings of him since, and what is more singular, you, Alice, said nothing either to Mary or me yesterday of having seen him; so I hardly believed James when he told me of it this morning. I wish to know what actually passed, and why you said nothing of it?"

While these words were being spoken, Alice recovered her speech, and her powers of reflection, which told her that it was well her uncle's question should relieve her from all doubt, should oblige her to intrust Arthur's safety to him; and she therefore

replied, slowly, indeed, but with a steady voice :

“That it was true she saw Arthur, the day before ; true, also, that she had been purposely silent on the subject. She knew, her uncle would never say or do anything that might put his nephew in peril ; but thought that the longer he could remain in ignorance the better it was, for him, for every one.”

“That is a thorough woman’s notion ! not like your usual sense, Alice,” said her uncle, sharply. “Then,” continued he, “what has it been ? Hayward hinted yesterday that he could not understand Ferrers having given himself such a wound by any sort of awkwardness or accident ;



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with his profligacy, now with his violence. If anything happen to Ferrers — ay, or even without that—it may go hard with him.”

“Knowing how much was to be feared,” said Alice, “I made him promise to go straight to the Bramstones at Boulogne, and stay there till he learnt how it went with Mr. Ferrers. I considered what he ought to do, as I saw he was past taking thought for himself.”

“I can believe it,” said her uncle; “to give him his due, I suppose the situation was new to him. But what brought him here?”

“It would be hard to say,” replied his niece, faintly.



my own name, I don't want to see my nephew hanged or outlawed, let his deserts be what they may. So I trust we shall be able to keep things quiet, though we should have a better chance had I known all at once."

"I made a great mistake," said Alice, in a subdued tone, "God grant I may not have to repent of it for ever!" added she earnestly.

Mr. Darrell cast a searching look on his niece (who appeared for the moment unconscious of his presence), but he rose without addressing her, and began walking up and down the room, seeming to muse aloud.

"It is strange too," observed he, "and

not like anything we have ever known of Arthur to quarrel with that fellow because he asked him for money, which, I have no doubt, he had done a score of times before, and (lately at least) got the same answer. So, Ferrers had been to London?" inquired he of Alice.

She replied that he had.

"Then," continued the old gentleman, still speaking half to himself, "as he was in such pressing want of money immediately after, I suppose I may conjecture what sort of success he had had to reward him for his journey thither."

"Indeed, uncle," answered Alice, "you may very easily; I said nothing to Mary on that subject yesterday. But really

she need not have alarmed herself as she did."

"Of that I am now perfectly satisfied," said Mr. Darrell, "I wish I had always been so, and not let myself be swayed even for a second by the repetition of gossiping nonsense which never tells the right tale of what is to be told. But this business of Arthur's is a terrible one, and makes a very ugly story, turn it which way you will. What possessed me ever to ask him over to England? just out of a foolish feeling of old regard, and a deluded idea that he had reformed—improved—as if any real improvement was to be dreamt of in one who had once degraded himself so far! That marriage of his has been a

shame and a misery to all his connections !”

“It has brought most misery on himself!” exclaimed Alice, sorrowfully.

“It is fit it should,” said her uncle : “if ever there was an abandoned set, it is those Ferrers’s. But it is an ill-wind that blows nobody good ; and I am thankful that Alfred, who is about the worst of the gang, is (for some sufficient reason of course) not to be found just now—unable to be made use of in any way by busybodies, or folks who think it their duty to make a fuss ; for the thing might be taken up so as to give us a world of trouble. Lord Northleigh, from what I hear, is not likely to let himself be put forward in a hurry,

unless I were to turn his brother out to die in a ditch ; for he has no wish to be encumbered with him. I never thought to care whether a Ferrers lived or died ; but I hope to God this fellow will get over it, and nothing shall be wanting that I can do, or can have done for him, as far as that goes. You will come and see Mary to-morrow, Alice, I dare say. I shall tell her nothing of all this as yet : she is far too nervous to bear it, or to keep counsel. But I have said now what I came to say ; and you can have Charly into the room again when you like, though why you should be troubled with him here I do not know," said the old gentleman, resuming in silence

the quarter-deck exercise in which he had paused.

He put together much that he had observed and learnt during the last half-hour—compared it with several past occurrences, which, trifling in themselves, and unnoticed at the time, now returned to his memory ; and impressions were thence formed in his mind, vague indeed, and confused, but only the more irritating to him from his resolution neither to investigate their grounds, nor to give vent to his suspicions. He looked discomposed and angry, took leave shortly, and said as he was going :

“ My plan is to drive round by Woodham, where I shall go in and ask myself for our

second post letters; and then I mean to give out that Arthur is unexpectedly detained; he may presently, you know, be as unexpectedly obliged to go abroad. This is the best expedient I can hit on at present; so good-bye! You can keep the boy if you choose, only—remember! if he gets spoilt on all hands, as he bids fair to be, it will be his ruin, as it was his father's before him."

He departed, and Alice remained in a state of mind, if possible more disturbed than before his visit, though she fully relied on his sparing nothing to ensure his nephew's safety, with which (even supposing all attachment to be extinguished) the honour of his family was in his eyes bound up.

She had made no reply to her uncle's strictures on Arthur Darrell; she knew too well that they were (in appearance at least) amply grounded; but now, in his depth of misfortune, he appeared to her anew as the lover of her youth, capable of generosity and self-sacrifice in the midst of his vices, unstained by any act of meanness, and faithful in soul to herself through all. This man, so dear to her from her earliest days, might be for life a wanderer on the face of the earth, cut off from all ties, uncared for, unconsolated. What would she not give to share his exile? — to soften his doom? All she had, save honour and virtue!

“That was a long and bitter sorrow,”

said she to herself, "which I knew in those days, when it was mingled with anger and contempt; when I thought Arthur false and treacherous; but this is a far different—a more consuming grief. Night and day the thought besets me—the eager longing to be with him, wherever he may be. I know this is unlawful—sinful; I pray to be pardoned for it—to be healed from it; I know that it is through his own grievous fault that we are parted—that the woman to whom we have both been sacrificed could have had no power over him—no claim upon him, had he been a less sworn servant of his senses and his vanity; I know, too, that he ought to have checked the slander

cast upon me without violence—ought to have considered that my fame did not live in Horace Ferrers' report; yet, when I beheld him, blood-stained, conscience-stricken, homeless, through and by love of me, could I pass judgment on him? No! for be he what he may, he is no deceiver, nor need I blush to have loved him—no! and I repent not of the vow I made him yesterday; for if he be spared, its observance shall afford him life-long proof that his heart has been devoted to no thankless idol!"

Her meditation was interrupted by Charly, who now entered the room and ran up to her, saying:

"Mayn't I stay with you now?"

She took him on her knee, overwhelming him with caresses, and asking him with almost childish eagerness, "If he loved her?" The little boy answered her with kisses, in the midst of which he whispered a petition "to be taken to feed the birds." Alice consented, and led him away to the aviary; but after he had fully enjoyed himself there, unable as she was to fix her mind on any occupation, she wandered restlessly from room to room, still holding the child by the hand, till from sheer fatigue she sat down on a sofa, and threw herself back on the cushions, while her little companion, climbing up beside her, related, for the twentieth time, a story which had in some way excited his imagination.

To the sound of this oft-told tale, and in consequence of the little repose the night had afforded her, she fell asleep for a while, and on waking found Charly nestling close to her, but wide awake, and watching her with a look in which curiosity and affection were blended.

“Poor Aunt Alice!” said he, laughing. “You have been asleep! like our baby at home, that goes to bed in the day-time; but I lay quite still, for I would not wake you.”

“You are my dear good Charly!” cried she, struggling to repress her tears. “But I must not spoil you, as they say I do; so bring ‘Little Willie’ to read to me.”

Charly obeyed ; and Miss Wentworth listened, or seemed to listen, till it was time for his noon-day walk.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER three more days of suspense, Alice Wentworth received a letter from Boulogne, which relieved her from a part at least of the terrors that ceaselessly haunted her, by informing her of Arthur Darrell's arrival; but Mrs. Bramstone's account, hurried though it was, presented such a picture of a man, distracted with

grief and remorse, and horror-struck at himself and his own actions, as to afford her no further consolation than the knowledge that he had (reluctantly indeed) consented to remain with his friend for the present. Horace Ferrers' state in the meantime continued doubtful ; but, after the lapse of a week, strong hopes began to be entertained of his recovery, and, at the end of a fortnight, it was evident that his restoration to health might be confidently expected. Mr. Darrell and Mr. Hayward took their measures so well, that rumours of the true nature of what had passed scarcely began to be whispered before he was already convalescent, and in a situation to be made sensible that

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it was for his interest to keep his own and his brother-in-law's counsel. Of this he was persuaded by the means of conviction to which he was most open; that is, he was given to understand that, on condition of his silence, and of his returning without delay to the continent, Mr. Darrell would discharge the more pressing of his debts. He agreed at once to the arrangement, and even allowed spontaneously that he had been chiefly to blame in the quarrel.

Alice Wentworth had learnt from Mrs. Bramstone that Arthur Darrell received with deep thankfulness the intelligence of his brother-in-law's probable recovery, and of his own consequent freedom from blood-

guiltiness ; but she learnt at the same time that he refused "even to think of returning home." On his first arrival, while pouring forth without reserve everything that was on his mind, he had declared that, "come what would, he could never see his wife again;" and Bramstone, who could scarcely be surprised at anything uttered by a man so desperate, listened to his speech without answer or remark. But he wrote himself to Lady Emily with (Darrell's knowledge), and as if by his request, confessing just so much of what had happened as must in course of time have become known to her, and touching on her husband's extreme remorse and distress of mind, which rendered him incapable of addressing her

himself. He trusted that, on the receipt of Lady Emily's answer, things would in a manner, "right themselves." But it proved otherwise ; for though Horace Ferrers' ultimate recovery became every day more sure, and the tone of Lady Emily's answer gave Darrell every facility for writing to announce his intention of joining her, he declared anew to Bramstone that "since he had learnt that Alice's life had been blighted as well as his own, Lady Emily had become hateful to him, and he could never live with her again." His host reasoned with him vainly. He had no defined plan of life to propose, but talked wildly of giving up all he had to Lady Emily and the younger children, and

seeking his fortune elsewhere with Charly. The idleness of such projects was for ever demonstrated to him, but without making any direct reply, he continued to repeat obstinately, "that he neither could nor would return home again."

Charly, meanwhile, remained at Cranfield for some weeks, in spite of Mr. Darrell's frequent observation, "that there was 'no use' in his being left there any longer."

Mrs. Thornton was unwilling to remove him, for her own sake at first, but afterwards because she saw that his presence was a consolation to Alice, whose unhappiness she plainly perceived, though she misinterpreted its cause; for, having once taken up the impression that she was not

absolutely indifferent to Horace Ferrers, many circumstances occurred to strengthen it.

She attributed her having refused him to "an effort of principle," coupled with regard for the opinions of her family; and she ascribed the deep melancholy which preyed on her, to the pain that effort had cost her, as well as to anxiety for his safety. And it may be added that other persons in the neighbourhood drew the same conclusions.

At length Mr. Darrell announced, with a degree of satisfaction which Mrs. Thornton could not precisely understand, that he found it would be in his power to send Charly to Boulogne under the care of a Mr. and

Mrs. Hammond, who engaged to deposit him there on their way to Paris; and accordingly one evening, when it was already late, the child arrived at the Bramstones, where he was received by his father with an eagerness of overflowing affection which touched his hostess, and inclined her to think more hopefully of the future.

Before many minutes had elapsed, however, and before Charly had at all recovered from the scared feeling with which his sudden journey in the company of strangers had oppressed him, he was carried off to the nursery, where he was quickly undressed, and, in a few minutes more, fast asleep.

But the next morning after breakfast he appeared with a letter in his hand, which he presented rather timidly to Mrs. Bramstone, saying :

“ Aunt Alice told me.”

Mrs. Bramstone thanked and caressed the child ; but seeing his father approach, she retreated hastily to her own room, opened the letter, and read as follows :

“ My dear Sophy,

“ Your last letters have caused me a great addition of sorrow. That your guest should at first have felt great reluctance to return home could not surprize me ; but I hoped that, even if that reluctance did not lessen,

sense of duty and Philip's influence would prevail over it. I reproach myself bitterly for having contributed to cause this deadness to the feeling of what is right ; or, at least, this inability to fulfil what he must know to be so.

“For I am aware that the weakness I betrayed to him, must have tended to increase the over-vehement feeling which has for the present dried up all other affections, loosened all other ties. I shall never forgive myself that want of self-command, that yielding to what I ought not to have even felt, which has rendered his duty more painful to him ; for, if not happy in his household, I know he has hitherto been patient of its imperfections ; and to

think he is unable to be so now through my fault, is more than I can bear. Not only I cannot forgive myself, but I cannot hope to be forgiven, an error which produces such lasting evil. If I thought prayer or penance of mine could obtain him from on high, the light to see, the strength to fulfil, what he is called on to do and to suffer, the austerities of the strictest ascetic would fall short of those in which I would spend my life.

“As it is, I implore God’s mercy for him, and for myself, without ceasing; and if I ever enjoy the semblance of peace here below, it can but be when I hear he has truly resigned himself by accepting the punishment laid on him, even as I strive

to accept that I have received for setting my affections too entirely, too adoringly on any earthly being. I know well, my dear Sophy, that no endeavour of yours or of your husband's will be wanting for this end; but I sorely fear a fresh poison penetrated his soul in that last day at Cranfield, darkening his understanding, and hardening his heart; and against such evil influence there is no human aid. Such as I am, and with such thoughts to contend with, I am soon to be utterly alone, for Charly, who will take you this, leaves me to-morrow.

“God grant the sight of him may reveal more to his father than the wisest and kindest words can do, and make him

acknowledge that there is something else left for him in this world than to spend his life in fruitless regrets, in aimless wanderings! It is idle for me to continue in this strain, and I have no heart to speak of anything else; for, till I learn that Arthur has formed the resolution of returning to his home, I can know neither rest nor peace. Give a kiss to my dear little Charly, and believe me ever

“Your affectionate

“ALICE WENTWORTH.”

When Mrs. Bramstone had finished reading, she suddenly recollected that she had promised her eldest boy to take him

and Charly out for a walk, and that the children would be coming to fetch her in a moment.

She was soon ready herself, and about to leave the room, when her husband came in, and she handed him Alice's letter, begging him at the same time to take care of it while she was out. On her return she asked for it, and was told, "she should have it directly—it was quite safe."

"Where is it, Philip? What have you done with it? You have not given it to Arthur?" said she, with a look of terror.

"I have, though," replied he.

"Are you mad, Philip?" exclaimed she.

"I hope not," was his answer; "but I am a madman's keeper, I believe. I have wasted words in vain on Darrell to make him do what is right. Last night, after his boy's arrival, and again this very day, I have laid before him all that one would think might influence a man. I might as well have talked to a rock upon the beach; and it struck me, as I was reading Alice's letter, that, though it was in some senses a queer engine to use, it was the only chance remaining; and the cause is, Heaven knows, a sufficient one, especially as that letter, in fact, tells no more of her feelings than he knows well enough already—so you must forgive me."

"At all events it can't be helped now,"

said his wife, in a tone of hopeless resignation; "but I never knew you do anything so unlike yourself."

"That comes of having to do with such unmanageable people," replied he. "I suppose I ought to make allowances; but I do lose all patience when I see him giving way to everything like a woman."

In the course of the morning, Darrell restored the letter to his friend without word or comment. He scarcely spoke during the remainder of that day, or the whole of the next, and Bramstone sank nearly into despair; but on the following afternoon, his guest informed him in few words that he had already written to Lady

Emily, and intended to set off in three days for Nice.

“Now if that woman will but have common sense,” said Bramstone, after communicating this intelligence to his wife, “and if that cursed rascal, Horace, do but hold his tongue, I see no reason why they should not get on as fairly as they ever did. I do not say that was much, but still they did get on as well as many—better than some people.”

After a stay of nearly a week, Charly bid adieu to his new friends and his little companions, regretted by all, and especially by Mrs. Bramstone, with whom he had become a great favourite. At the moment of setting off, Darrell said

to his friend, as he shook hands with him :

“You may rely on it, I shall go through with everything so as to give her and myself a fair chance.”

CHAPTER VIII.

ARTHUR DARRELL'S resolution to return home had been a victory over himself, but that victory was the result rather of feeling than of principle ; and, the effort once made, the journey once begun, he relapsed into that state of mind which was habitual to him, weakly yielding to every impulse, and feeding every vain regret. His affection for his child had been ever strong and

deep, but the circumstance of his having become an object of interest to Alice Wentworth, and of his coming directly from under the charge of that beloved being, had increased that affection tenfold, and given it a more passionate character. Charly had always been listened to with interest, but now his father hung on every word he uttered ; for his talk, like that of all children, was about himself ; and to talk of himself was to talk of Cranfield and of her who had been his constant companion, and had ministered to all his little pleasures. "Aunt Alice," it is true, was only mentioned incidentally ; but Darrell's imagination could only too well supply the looks and words which every little event must

have called forth, and he reached Nice in a frame of mind ill-calculated to endure the meeting he so much dreaded. He got through it, however, better than might have been expected; for the painful embarrassment he could by no effort conceal, appeared no more than natural at first sight of the woman whose brother's life had been endangered by his hand. In writing to Lady Emily, after expressing deep sorrow and self-reproach for his violent and intemperate conduct, Darrell had besought her to spare him and herself any allusion to the subject; but intreated her to show by look and manner that she forgave him, and that she did justice to what he now felt.

She did receive him with affection, and for some hours her husband cherished the hope that she would observe the spirit as well as the letter of his request. But he was mistaken; for before he slept, he was informed by Lady Emily, in a somewhat set phrase, "that it was not her intention to exact any account of the painful occurrences of six weeks back: that, she knew, could only excite unpleasant feelings; but she must endeavour to obtain a better understanding of the cross accidents which had previously interfered so sadly with poor Horace's prospects."

"I know of no particular accident," answered Darrell, "but he was a fool to go to England at all, as I told him before-

hand; and he was a greater fool still to venture into London, where he might be sure of not being left alone. The consequence was, he had to run for it; then he had recourse to me, and I—as you know—but I have told you already how much I feel myself to blame.”

“It was not that I meant to ask about; I did not want to discuss that point,” replied Lady Emily. “What I want to understand is, how it was that, when everybody was saying Horace was going to be married to Miss Wentworth, and when he was so much with her (I know all that from Captain Elliott), how was it that all those horrid duns of his would not wait till he was married?”

"But he was not going to be married to her," said Darrell.

"Well, that is the very thing," insisted Lady Emily. "How was that? He meant to propose the very first opportunity, I know, and he was always with her, at her own house and at your uncle's too."

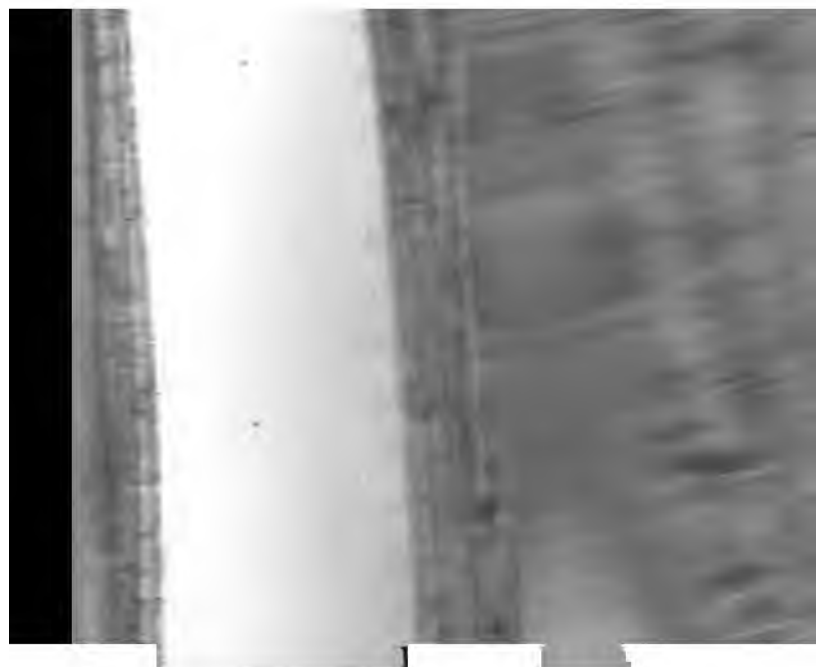
"I have no doubt he intended it, but that does not alter the matter," observed Darrell.

"But tell me though," continued she, "was Miss Wentworth *staying* at your uncle's?"

"Yes."

"For any time?"

"A month — five weeks altogether," answered Darrell.



“Five weeks while you were there!” exclaimed Lady Emily. “And in all that time could not you do anything for poor Horace?”

“It never was my wish to do anything in that way for him,” was the reply.

“That is so unfriendly of you!—so unkind!” said she angrily. “But is there no hope? or must he, the moment he can stir, cross the water, and lose every chance?”

“He has no chance to lose,” rejoined Darrell. “I see none for a man who has been flatly refused.”

“Refused!” cried Lady Emily, “refused! are you sure of it? And why?”

“I am sure because I had it from his

own mouth ; and as to the ' why,' I suppose it was for the reason why people uually are refused—that they do not please. I always told you, and him too, that he had no chance."

" Arthur, you must have set her against him! Now did you tell her that he played, or that story about—"

" I scarcely ever mentioned him," interrupted Darrell, sharply : " I should not have presumed to interfere in her affairs one way or another ; but she certainly did not get her impressions of him from me."

" I see precisely how it was," said Lady Emily ; " you did not exactly sit down to abuse him ; but whenever he was there,

you stood by looking as stiff and annoyed as you could, to show every one how much to be pitied you were for having such a brother-in-law !”

Darrell heard in silence ; but after a pause the lady proceeded :

“ Well, it is you, or rather it is we all, that must suffer for your obstinacy. You cannot but expect—it is only natural that Horace, pushed out of all his chances in life as he has been, should come upon you more than ever in his difficulties ; and how will you like that ?”

“ Emily !” replied Darrell, in a tone of suppressed rage, “ I will not repeat what I have said, because it is useless, when you are determined not to believe me.

But this I will tell you (and it is the last thing I shall say to-night), that I would rather you, and I, and the children should starve, than have been accessory in the slightest degree to a marriage between Horace and Alice Wentworth."

He kept his word, and spoke no more; while his wife wept and bewailed herself as the most unhappy of women till late in the night, or rather, early in the morning. Next day the subject of Horace's disappointment was not renewed, and breakfast passed very fairly in conversation about indifferent things, and with the (sometimes rather equivocal) help of Charly, who displayed various little acquisitions

he had made during his stay in England; accounting for many of them by saying: "Aunt Alice gave me this, or that."

"Who is Aunt Alice?" asked his mother.

"Oh! Aunt Alice!" said the child, looking at his father, "she lives at Cranfield."

"He means Miss Wentworth," said Darrell. "Mrs. Thornton's children call her aunt, though strictly speaking they are cousins. Charly caught the habit from them, and Miss Wentworth was good-natured enough to let him go on with it."

"Well, it *was* good-natured," observed

Lady Emily, smiling in a peculiar manner ;
“and it just shows me that, however things have turned, there must have been at one time a very fair chance for some people—you know how like his uncle that boy is! It cannot be helped now, but I must ever think some things very provoking—and some people too.”

Darrell took no notice whatever of this speech, but finished his breakfast in silence.

In the course of the morning, it so happened that Lady Emily witnessed the unpacking of a portion of Charly's wardrobe, which had arrived, mixed indiscriminately with everything his father had left behind him at Darrell Place. As the child's clothes

were being collected, he himself thought fit to lend a helping hand ; but on espying his father's dressing-case in the confused heap, he opened it, as was his wont, and taking out the miniature, said to his mother :

“That is Aunt Alice.”

“You are talking nonsense, Charly,” said Lady Emily ; “and you are in the way besides.”

“Yes ; it is Aunt Alice, when she has got her curls,” persisted the child.

His mother had seen the picture oftentimes ; but having been once told carelessly “that it was the copy of one which had been a good deal admired,” she had never troubled herself farther about it. Now, how-

ever, she was surprised at her son's repeated assertion of its being "Aunt Alice," of her having "said so herself;" and though inclined to believe there was nothing in it but a fancy or confusion of his babyish brain, she noticed the incident enough to resolve to ask its meaning next time she saw her husband. His reply to her question was evasive. "Oh, yes; I believe Charly thought it like her." But something in his air and look as he muttered these words struck his wife, and she repeated the question in its most direct form.

"Whose picture is it? Whom does it represent?"

"Miss Wentworth," replied Darrell, with effort.

“Yet you have had it all this while! How did you come by it?”

He was silent for a few seconds; then fixing his eyes on Lady Emily, he said slowly and firmly:

“Ten years ago, when my engagement with Alice Wentworth was broken off, I was called on to restore the picture she had given me. I obeyed—but not till I had had it copied. The miniature you have seen is that copy.”

Great was Lady Emily’s astonishment, but still greater was her anger, and she observed “that she was amused to find that he had done, or tried to do, the very thing he thought it such an iniquity in poor Horace to attempt.”

Darrell sat before her motionless, and answered not a word; but she continued:

"Well, and what broke off this engagement of your's to 'Aunt Alice,' whom no one else is to marry because you could not have her? What was it?"

"There is no use in lying," replied Darrell, sternly, "nor in going about the bush either at this time of day. One of her cousins spied out my intercourse with a French girl who had come after me from Paris—he told—and all was put an end to."

"That was a stupid trick of yours!" exclaimed Lady Emily.

"It *was* stupid—you may say that!" echoed Darrell, with a bitter smile.

“It amazes me more than ever,” continued she, “how you can speak as you do of poor Horace, when, by your own account, you were just as bad.”

“I was bad—as bad as you please,” answered Darrell; “but there was one great difference between Horace and me: whereas he thinks of nothing but getting himself out of difficulties and into clover, *I* loved Alice Wentworth, and was loved by her.”

“Indeed!” said Lady Emily, with a look of incredulous disdain, “the way you lost your good luck would hardly make one think it!”

“So,” said he, looking full at her, but still outwardly commanding his

passion, "you do not think it possible a man should have anything to say to one woman, who flings herself at his head, while he loves another with heart and soul?"

"I am sure I do not know what is possible or impossible for men—they are so heartless! But if you and she had really loved each other, as you will have it, you would have made it up somehow by the time she was of age, and she would have forgiven your peccadillo."

"Who tells you she did not?" asked Darrell, now losing all self-control, and trembling with rage. "She *did* forgive me—yes! last May six years—you may look at me! Last May six years she

and I were reconciled and happy; we were all but engaged on the 28th—on the 29th, *you* know what had become of me.”

As he uttered these words, by which he in one moment lost the merit of six years and a half's forbearance, Lady Emily, thus roughly informed of the sacrifice made to her, burst into tears and violent lamentations, in the course of which she protested that, had she known he had loved another, she would have drowned or starved herself, sooner than sought his protection; that she wished he had never returned home, as it was only to express his hatred, and to load her with insults; and she concluded by advising him “to

go back to England, and to Miss Wentworth."

"And so I should," said Darrell, "for there is little enough to keep me here except poor Charly; but I cannot; for, though some people may not believe it, there are such things as virtuous women. Alice Wentworth is one; and she exacted from me, as the price of pardon for rash words which burst from me at parting, a promise — a solemn vow, never to seek her again."

"You have made many promises and solemn vows in your life," observed Lady Emily, scornfully.

"I mean to keep this one," said he, and left the room.

He walked hastily out of the house, turning into the most lonely streets he could find; and there, when the extreme violence of his anger had in some measure subsided, his reflections were full of bitterness and self-reproach. His passion had led him beyond all bounds of generosity, of humanity, even; he was conscious of having made his situation twenty times worse since the morning; and the spoken words could not be recalled. He had taunted his wife with the sin he had shared with her; reproached her for costing him the happiness he would never have been called on to sacrifice had he himself been blameless.

What could be more cruel? more un-

like anything of which he could have conceived himself capable? and for such utter want of generosity, he felt that her conduct, however irritating, formed but a slight excuse. He thought of returning, and asking pardon; but he abhorred the kind of scene he must encounter; so that he wandered about, partly on the sea-shore, partly in the street adjoining his house, till the December twilight had already faded into darkness.

At length he forced himself to go in, and on entering, was met by Charly, who told him with a very concerned face, that "poor mamma was ill, and had gone to bed."

This announcement did not particularly

alarm him, as it was not unusual for Lady Emily, when either vexed or anxious, to take to her bed till such time as her nerves had recovered from the shock they had received. He was, however, endeavouring to frame some suitable reply to Charly's information, when a letter was put into his hands, which a gentleman had just left. It was from Bramstone, and written the very day after Darrell had started for Nice. He was surprised, for his friend was not much more given than himself to unnecessary expenditure of ink and paper; but on perusing it, he understood that it was meant as a sort of reward or encouragement to him; inasmuch as it contained the copy of a sentence out of a letter from Alice Went-

worth, written directly she had heard of his resolution to go home, and received the day after he had left Boulogne. The extract ran as follows :

“ It is long since I have felt so much relief as I experienced to-day on learning that that unhappy man has at last submitted himself—has consented to do his duty. I thank God for it; and I, rely the more on his good resolutions, because I feel sure, that with his great kindness of disposition, there is no fear of his not carrying them out, when once among those who have claims on his love and protection.”

These words sent to him for his consolation, now conveyed the most piercing

reproof that an enemy's heart could have devised.

“So she thanks God for my doing my duty! relies on the kindness of my disposition, when I have been acting like a fiend! why should the rest of an angel be troubled for such as I? How have I obeyed her? How have I even endeavoured to lessen the sorrow I have caused? But though too late for my own peace—such as it is—it is yet in my power so far to do penance for my baseness of this day, as acknowledgment of it, and prayer for its pardon can go; and these I will instantly offer where they are due, cost what it may.”

He therefore went straight into his wife's

room, and with the strongest expressions of contrition, implored her forgiveness.

It was long before he received any other answer than hysterical sobs ; and when Lady Emily at last spoke, it was only to wish for death, and to declare that “come what might, life must now be ever a burden, since she knew Alice Wentworth was preferred to her.”

The sight of so much sorrow, the depth and reality of which he could not doubt, penetrated him with yet sharper remorse, and filled him with desire to atone for what he had inflicted. Unfortunately, this softened feeling was soon allayed ; for when the violence of her agitation was in some degree spent, and he endeavoured to speak sooth-

ing words to her, she interrupted him with a reproach for the great and sudden eagerness he had shown to visit England, "which" she said, she "now perfectly understood."

This reproach was unfounded; and he tried to justify himself by making her aware that his chief reason for wishing to visit his uncle in June, was that he should then have avoided Alice Wentworth; and that he had only determined on going to Darrell Place in August, because he was persuaded that she was passing the autumn in the north of England. But Lady Emily, even supposing her to have been in a calmer and more discriminating mood, was at no time in the habit of either expecting or appreciating

truth, so that he gained nothing by the frankness of his avowal, which only furnished her with materials for bitter retorts, and for complaints which were more irritating than tender; till at length, by dint of penitential endurance on his side, and of something between weariness and affection on her's, a reconciliation was effected.

But irretrievable mischief had been done; and now that the poison of jealousy was added to all Lady Emily's discontent, it became more and more difficult for her husband to fulfil good resolutions, and for her to give him credit for them; so that it seemed as if neither could say or do anything pleasing to the other.

What had passed would have been a sore

trial to the temper and generosity of the most high-minded of women; and that quality had never in any degree belonged to Lady Emily. She now began to feel in its full extent the punishment of her infidelity to her first vows; but this sense of deserved unhappiness was far from leading so weak and ill-regulated a mind to submission or repentant mildness. It only augmented her fretfulness and irritability, which increased to a still higher pitch after a visit—a visit of reconciliation, which Horace Ferrers, by his own proposal, paid to his brother-in-law a few months later.

To do him justice, he would never of himself have been guilty of so “unfair” a thing by all mankind as to let his sister

know of her husband's infidelity (of the heart at least.) But on finding her aware of the fact, he made no scruple of satisfying her on all sorts of details which a diseased curiosity impelled her to ask for. They discussed the subject when alone together, he with characteristic nonchalance, she with bitter eagerness, in a manner not always advantageous to Miss Wentworth's reputation, and—which was of more consequence—highly disadvantageous to what chance there might be of Lady Emily's jealous rancour gradually wearing itself away.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Bramstone found, on visiting his friend at Nice, in the following summer, that such hope as

he had cherished of his regaining a passable share of peace, if not of happiness, had proved utterly vain. Darrell was too sincere, and too much in want of vent for everything that was on his mind, not to confess the great share of blame due to him, in the terribly embittered state of feeling which now existed between him and his wife; but he also complained of her utter incapability of understanding him, or of appreciating his best-meant efforts to please her. Of this, Bramstone saw proofs enough; for Lady Emily's inhospitality and discourtesy towards himself, showed too plainly the disposition in which she was. She had always hitherto behaved to him with civility; but now the bare knowledge that he was the husband of

Alice Wentworth's friend and cousin rendered her so unable to conceal her displeasure at seeing him, that he resolved never to visit her house again.

CHAPTER IX.

ARTHUR DARRELL'S life wore on in dreary monotony. He was not exposed to the temptation of revisiting England; for Mr. Darrell, who seemed to have lost all the interest he formerly took in him, never repeated his invitation; and he was grieved by the knowledge of having forfeited his uncle's affection, albeit he did not regret the result.

Many trifling circumstances also made him aware that, though he had escaped the legal consequences to which he might have been subjected by his quarrel with his brother-in-law, it had lessened such amount of esteem as he had been hitherto held in; for the facts could not eventually be concealed; and the most charitably disposed drew from them the conclusion that "Darrell had lived so much with the Ferrers's that he had sunk to 'their level,'" and to this reproach he was most keenly sensible.

He continued to live at Nice; and, in spite of his constant expressions of dislike to the place, never quitted it but twice, when spending a short time with the Bramstones during their annual excursions

to the continent, on both which occasions he was accompanied by Charly, now his only remaining source of pleasure and consolation. It deserves to be recorded as Darrell's sole merit among many and great faults, that he seldom allowed this concentrated affection to betray him into pernicious indulgence of the child whom Alice Wentworth had declared "capable of becoming everything he could wish," although the temptation to do so was the greater from the kind of dislike—or diminished affection at least—with which Lady Emily regarded the little boy ever since his return from England. This change on her part might have proved most hurtful, had it not fortunately worked as the means of inducing

her husband to take a more active interest in the child than could have been expected from a man of his previous habits ; and whether it were from that occupation in itself, or from growing resignation to his lot, or from a species of bodily languor which seemed to be creeping upon him, or from all these causes combined, he learned at length to endure with comparative calmness the vexations which daily pressed on his spirit.

During the last visit he paid to the Bramstones, they were struck with a considerable change in his appearance ; but, in spite of that circumstance, it was with as much surprise as grief that Philip received the news of his friend's sudden and

dangerous illness, coupled with a request that he might see him once more. Bramstone obeyed the summons in time to receive his last instructions, and to witness his departure from this life in humble penitence, and in thankfulness at being spared longer trial. Lady Emily abandoned herself to despair on his death; but much of her grief gave way to anger and indignation on finding that Bramstone and another old friend were named as guardians to her children, and that she herself was excluded from any real authority over them; positive restrictions being also placed on their intercourse with various members of the Ferrers family, designated by name.

Darrell's will farther decreed that, after

the lapse of twelve months his children should be conveyed to England for their education ; his eldest boy (now in his ninth year) was to return there at once with Mr. Bramstone in order to be placed at school. During these twelve months, Lady Emily was the torment of Philip Bramstone's life. She chose to consider him as the enemy who had instigated her husband to measures so insulting to her ; and she resisted and opposed him by every means in her power ; so that it was with real relief, not unmixed with a sort of contemptuous amusement, that he learnt, when the year had expired, that she was about to be united to the " Conte Eugenio ——" an Italian of good family, but whose devotion to the

gaming-table made her jointure, small as it was, a convenience to him.

By this step and her consequent continuance abroad, she virtually renounced the care of her children, whose direct charge thus falling upon Bramstone, appeared both to him and to his wife less burdensome than perpetual contention with an irritated woman, who, though legally powerless, could always neutralize his efforts for the children's good.

During these years Alice Wentworth had resided chiefly at Cranfield. A great and abiding change had taken place in her; and a visible shade of sadness seemed to overspread her existence. Yet, as she was warm-hearted and affectionate, she continued to be hospitable towards her relations and

the friends of her youth ; but from general society she had withdrawn herself almost entirely. Her sorrow on hearing that Arthur Darrell was no more, though deep and lasting, was less bitter than that which weighed on her while she knew that his whole being was, as it were, rusting away in undignified wretchedness ; and it consoled her to think, that he had latterly given the best proof of repentance by patient submission to the doom which the sins of his youth had brought upon him. So that, even when bewailing him with torrents of tears, she acknowledged that no true friend could have desired the lengthening of a life, which threatened to become more and more miserable.

A few months after Lady Emily's re-marriage, when her children had been already some time domesticated at the Bramstones, Alice had the opportunity during a long visit she paid them, of revolving well a plan which had lately suggested itself to her; that, namely, of undertaking herself the care of Arthur Darrell's two daughters. She preferred her request to Philip, and was at first refused. But when she repeated it again and again, and he was convinced that in acceding to it he should further her happiness, he yielded; and the little girls now live under her protection, forming her main interest in life.

Those who have any curiosity respecting the Honourable Horace Ferrers and his destiny, may learn that on his return to the continent, he resumed his usual habits, relying for subsistence partly on the gaming-table, partly on his Russian Countess, and occasionally receiving assistance from his brother-in-law. However, after about two years spent in this manner, he was fortunate enough to captivate a handsome, but somewhat low-born English widow, whose income, though "terribly tied up," as he expressed it, was sufficient to place him in a state of ease and comparative affluence, to which his sister had despaired of his ever attaining, since the failure of his suit to Miss Wentworth; and this marriage at least prevented

his being any longer a drain on the resources either of his mistress or his connections.

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